CAPTAIN TIPTOP

FRED·E·
JANETTE

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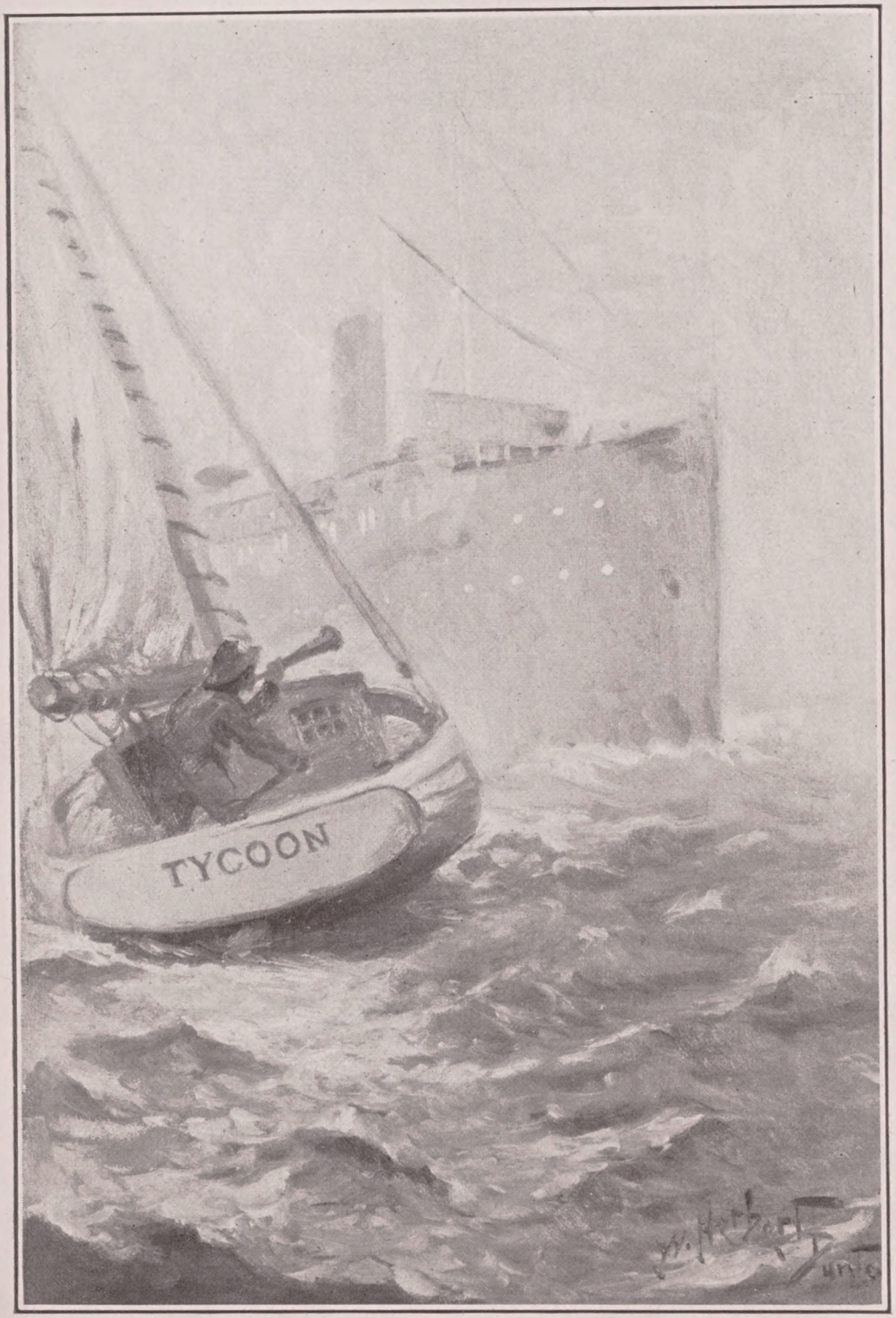

I BLEW AN EAR-SPLITTING BLAST.
(Page 20.)

CAPTAIN TIPTOP

A Story from the Log-Book of the Sloop-Yacht Tycoon

BY

FRED. E. JANETTE

ILLUSTRATED BY

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I blew an ear-splitting blast . . . . . *Frontispiece*

All this Denny observed at a glance 100

Then I crept to the edge of the veranda and looked over 190

Amidst stifling smoke and fumes of oil we struggled 250

To the Reader:

This is the writer's first story to appear in book form. He believes, however, that he has many friends among readers who find pleasure, and perhaps some instruction not of a harmful sort, in that class of literature which pertains to "boys and boats." It is in the hopeful expectation that "Captain Tip-top" (who is not altogether a fictitious personage), will find a place in the reader's appreciation with others of his heroes, who have figured in serial fiction, that he steps out of the story to speak a word direct.

Old friends will discover that, as were several of the stories alluded to, this is a story of the Great Lakes—this is a story of Lake St. Clair and the Detroit river. The writer has always preferred to locate his stories in territory with which he is familiar through personal experiences; and he could conceive of no reason why the practice should be departed from in this instance. Certainly the indicated field is large enough. Indeed, it has been but indifferently culti-

vated by story writers. It abounds in materials for good story-making, necessitating no reprehensible deviation from the truth. There is a certain proportion of truth in the story here presented. Just how much it is not expedient to state, for there are persons yet alive on the scene of the adventures of "Captain Tiptop" and his friends, who would not consider a more particular disclosure as an evidence of good taste on the part of the writer.

In conclusion, it may be fair to record that this is a story without a moral, in the ordinary acceptance of the term. The writer reposes in the conviction that the activities of the average boy and girl can be commendably reflected without infringing on the plain duties of parents and guardians. If he has succeeded, there is no more question of morality with regard to this story, than there would be about a game of baseball or a boat-ride on the river.

F. E. J.

Detroit, Mich.

CHAPTER I.

Begins with a Disaster.

"'Tis eight bells—twelve o'clock—Captain Tiptop. Time for you to take your trick at the helm."

These words were addressed to me, and they were accompanied by a vigorous shake of my shoulder. I sat up in my berth, wide awake in an instant, for my slumbers had been light. Truly enough, the hands of the clock up against the forward end of the trunk-cabin, blended into one, covered the topmost figure of the dial, proclaiming the hour of twelve, or eight bells, in the sea parlance of my friend, Dennis Cleary.

Dennis Cleary was the crew of the sixty-four foot, center-board sloop-yacht Tycoon. My most particular friend, Perry Benson, and I, Hugh Rodman, comprised the remainder of the yacht's company. The Ty-

coon, one of the largest single-stickers on the Great Lakes at the time, was my property. My companions had tried to fasten upon me the title of Captain Rodman. This sounded stilted, and I opposed it. The nickname "Captain Tiptop," I owed to Denny Cleary, who was a whimsical chap, as you will learn if you follow this story. He had an idea that he was paying me an immense compliment. The new title suited me no better than the other, but no hint served to make Denny see the point, and Perry, observing my modesty in the matter, straightway adopted the use of it. And so Captain Tiptop I became on board the sloop, and as Captain Tiptop I salute the reader.

"What is the weather, Denny?" I asked, as I swung out of the berth and stood up.

"No change. The lake is as smooth as the minister's face on Sunday, and there isn't enough air stirring to make a match flicker."

"Is it raining? I don't hear it."

The question was prompted by Denny's bedraggled appearance. He wore an oilskin coat and tarpaulin hat, and upon these ha-

biliments beads of moisture glistened in the light of the cabin lamp.

"Fog," was his short explanation; and he doffed the hat and slapped it against his thigh, scattering a shower of drops over the cabin carpet.

"Fog! Then we're in a worse fix than ever."

"We are, Captain Tiptop. The wind was dying when you and Perry turned in at ten o'clock. It's giving the last gasps now, coming in cat's paws that are hardly strong enough to lift the main sheet out of the water. It's lucky we are in the lake and not in the river, or we'd have to get the mud-hook out. When the wind lay down to rest the fog came along and spread a blanket over it. It's so thick now that you couldn't shoot a hole through it with a howitzer."

I was used to Denny's grandiose speech and, making due allowance, came to a quick understanding of what our situation was. We were becalmed in a fog bank on Lake St. Clair. We had left the little town of Algonac, on the St. Clair River, about noon the day before, with a light wind from east-

northeast. Up to the time Perry and I turned in, leaving Denny at the helm, we logged perhaps three miles an hour. I hoped that as the night wore out the wind would shift and rise. For a certain reason I was in a great hurry to reach Detroit, which was my home and that of my companions, and the hailing port of the Tycoon. It now appeared, from Denny's account, that the wind instead of rising had fallen, and that a fog had settled down upon us.

However much the weather failed to meet with my approval, there was no way to fix it, as Denny cheerfully remarked. Having donned my ordinary attire I drew out of the locker under my berth a suit of oilskins and clambered up into the cockpit. Denny followed. As I straightened up to look about, my ears were smitten by a discordant blast from a horn.

"They're piping it up on board the schooner over there," said Denny, pointing over my shoulder.

Out over our port-quarter could dimly be discerned the loom of a schooner with all

canvas set. Like the Tycoon, she rested nearly motionless in the water.

"We can't do better than follow their example," said I. "Will you bring me the horn? You will find it in the galley in the lower locker on the starboard side."

Denny went forward, passing through the cabin. While he was gone I took a survey of the sloop's surroundings.

The Tycoon, under mainsail, topsail, and jib with bonnet on, and with helm lashed nearly amidships, was drifting on the level surface of the lake, hardly more than keeping pace with the sluggish current which sets through it from the St. Clair River. Half the time the tip of the boom, hanging over the starboard side and burdened with canvas, trailed in the water; but ever and anon there came a puff of wind that blew the fog in streaks like smoke and bellied out the cloth. At these times the boom would lift and the sheet tighten, only to drop back into the water again as the flaw went by and the calm supervened.

I removed the line with which Denny had lashed the tiller. As I did so there came two

more blasts from the horn on the deck of the vessel over the port-quarter.

"Those chaps must be mortally afraid of being run down, or else they're amusing themselves piping a dismal tune for the mermaids," Denny remarked, as he reappeared in the standing-room with the sloop's horn and laid it on the seat near the helm.

"They don't fail to appreciate the fact that they are lying full in the channel and that their lights, as you can see, are not visible above half a cable's length from their bows," said I irritatedly, for I thought Denny was guilty of gross carelessness in lashing the helm and leaving the standing-room to call me, when a thump on the trunk-cabin would have served as well.

But reproof, unless dagger pointed, seldom penetrated Denny's self-complacency.

"Let 'em watch out and toot for the both of us, then," he said. "We're standing so close together that their yowling will protect us as well as them."

"I differ from you there," was my response; and having possessed myself of the horn I blew as loud a blast as I could fetch.

"Say, Captain Tiptop, are you going to keep up that fish-monger's solo during my watch below?" ejaculated my companion.

"I am, with proper intervals. I won't disturb you any more than I can help. The noise doesn't seem to have bothered Perry; he hasn't stirred in his bunk. I advise you to turn in."

"I'm going to, Captain Tiptop; and I'm going to bury my head under the bed-clothes or there'll be no sleep for me this night."

I had a picture of him going through the lighted doorway into the cabin, stopping both ears with his hands as I sent another blast from the horn pealing over the yacht's side. Then he closed the doors and the slide, and no doubt went at once to bed.

In echo of the music I made, came the equally harsh notes from the horn on the deck of the schooner astern. As I sat at the helm with my arm extended along the well-nigh useless tiller and my right hand grasping the horn, I occasionally turned a glance over my shoulder at the shadowy stranger.

For two hours, or ever since I turned in at ten o'clock, this craft had stood in

nearly the same relative position to the Tycoon. She was a much larger vessel than the sloop, and carried a greater stretch of canvas. She had overhauled us at the time we issued from the ship canal which intersects the Flats, the famous summer cottage settlement near the head of the lake. When the wind fell, her speed like ours was reduced, and though she had drawn nearer she had not as yet been able to pass us. I could not be certain, but I believed I had seen her moored at one of the wharves in front of the town we had quitted the day before.

My interest in the stranger, however, was idle; at that moment I had no means of knowing what an important part she was to play in the series of singular events which were to begin that night upon her deck. Even while I looked at her my thoughts took a turn toward my immediate affairs. Laying down the horn for a moment I drew from the inside pocket of my coat a folded slip of yellow paper. This I spread out and held in the light of the binnacle lamp. The paper was a telegram which I had received at Algonac. It read:

"Must ask you to return at once. Very important."

The message was signed, "Marcus Alvord."

Marcus Alvord was my father's lawyer in Detroit. In my father's absence the lawyer represented him in his business transactions which, however, were limited; for my father was a retired lake captain and had withdrawn from active mercantile life a dozen years before. As, in the absence of my father, the lawyer stood in *loco parentis* (which is the term he himself used), there was nothing for me to do but obey his command to return to the city. Thus it was that the cruise of the Tycoon, which was to have extended as far as Mackinaw Island, was abruptly brought to the right-about. I had shown my fellow cruisers, Perry Benson and Dennis Cleary, the telegram, which was all the explanation I gave them at the time for putting the sloop on the return course. As a matter of fact, I understood the telegram no better than they, and it had aroused my apprehensions. There was that in my family circumstances and my daily life to prepare

me in a measure for something surprising, to come of this summons. What is meant by this obscure statement will be made clear in a short time.

I was immersed in thoughts of the telegram when I was startled by the sharp blast of a steamer's whistle. It sounded dead ahead and so close that my heart gave a jump. Springing to my feet and straining my eyes, I beheld the myriad lights of one of the big Mackinaw passenger liners glimmering through the fog and rapidly drawing closer.

A collision seemed inevitable. For the space of a breath I lost my head. First I shouted; then bethought myself of the horn, snatched it up, and blew an ear-splitting blast. I heard a bell ring on board the steamer, so close was she. Then she sheered to starboard, almost grazing our port-bow, as it seemed. She certainly passed so near that I could have thrown a line to her.

No more than time enough to fetch a breath of relief was given me, when I was startled anew by a shout and a blast from another horn. The schooner! In an instant

I realized what was to happen. The schooner's lights had been hidden from the steamer by our lofty mainsail. Our lights the steamer's people had discovered just in time, but in sheering off they had taken the direction that would carry them into the vessel behind the yacht.

While this thought flashed through my mind I heard another shout—then a chorus of cries over the port-quarter—and then a crash. The steamer had run down the schooner!

CHAPTER II.

An Eccentric Gentleman.

"If no accidents occur, we can make the trip in two weeks and not hurry ourselves in the least."

This remark Perry Benson addressed to me while we were perfecting plans for the Tycoon's cruise. That was five days before the opening of this story. I did not get a chance to explain in the first chapter that the story is made up from entries in the Tycoon's log-book, made at the time the various incidents occurred, but such is the fact. To ask the reader to turn back at this juncture, even for a moment, may be to try his patience, but turn back we must if we are to have a complete understanding of what followed, indeed grew out of, the collision between the Mackinaw liner and the schooner on Lake St. Clair. I will be brief.

Perry was my nearest neighbor, my most intimate friend and my room-mate at the military school we attended in the interior of the State. I have no brothers nor sisters, and my mother had been dead several years. My father and I, when we were at home, lived, together with two servants, in a place on what is called the river road, in the outskirts of Detroit. If it had not been for Perry, his father and mother, and sister Thyra, who was about my own age, my life would have been lonely. My father and I were the best of friends. This may sound odd. Would that I might say more; but he, it is unhappily necessary for me to mention, was never better satisfied with me, apparently, than when I kept away from him. We had reached an understanding quite early in my life. I was to do as I liked, within certain reasonable limitations, and I was to be my own master. Mr. Benson, with no thought of hurting anybody's feelings, frequently remarked in the Benson family circle when I was present, that my father was an odd specimen. There was little in common between the two men, and they seldom met.

Mr. Benson attended to his business in the city. My father studied and traveled. He was away from home, fully half the time. Where he went nobody knew but himself, unless it were his agent, Mr. Alvord. My parent seldom wrote to me, and never to tell me where he had been nor where he purposed to go next. I supposed he was rich and could afford to indulge his eccentricities. The time was at hand when I was to suffer a shock in this connection.

The Tycoon's Mackinaw cruise had been planned in outline, while Perry and I were at school. On the train, coming home for the long summer vacation, we had set the date for sailing. No opposition was to be expected from my father, though I had dutifully written to tell him of the project. No reply had come to the letter, which was nothing singular; but I was not prepared for the news that greeted me when I alighted at the door of my home.

Harvey Brott, the aged man of all work about the place, met me at the threshold. He never hailed my home-coming with joy, for I saw to it while there that he and his wife,

the housekeeper, performed the duties for which they were lodged, fed and paid. This ancient servitor did not come forward to take my satchel as usual, and he barely made room for me to enter the house.

"Your room is ready for you," was all he had to say, by way of greeting; and then, in answer to a question: "Your father has gone away," he shortly affirmed.

"Where?"

"Ask yourself the question. Your father never yet told me where he was going when he left. There's a letter for you on the library table."

The letter contained nothing to explain my father's absence. He expressed the wish that any plans I had formed might not suffer interruption because of his absence. Six months had elapsed since my last visit. I did not take it kindly that he should have fled, as it proved, the very day of my return.

That afternoon Perry came over. He had paid a visit to the shipyard up the river, where the sloop was kept when not moored to the wharf back of the house. He had found everything in readiness for our trip,

Dennis Cleary having faithfully executed the commissions I had given him by mail. It was during our talk that Perry voiced the opinion that the trip would not consume above two weeks.

"We could start this afternoon, if we wanted to," Perry added. "Denny said he would be here with the boat by four o'clock."

"It is four o'clock now."

We were sitting on the veranda in front of the house. We both got up and walked to the corner. Through the grove which surrounds the dwelling, and out on the river, we espied the big mainsail of the sloop just coming into view up the stream. We descended the steps and passed around the dwelling, turning toward the river shore.

If we had not been in such a hurry to be at the wharf when the sloop made the landing, and had delayed a minute longer, we would have discovered a horse and buggy coming along the curved driveway which stretches from the house to the river road. We would have noticed, undoubtedly, that the driver of the turnout was in a great hur-

ry, and we would have heard him call out to me when he saw us turn down the path that conducted through the grove to the wharf.

CHAPTER III.

Captain Tiptop Plays Detective.

At the moment Perry and I reached the Tycoon's dock, as a wharf is always called along the Great Lakes, the sloop was rounding to, below the structure, preparatory to making the landing. We assisted in making the boat fast, after which I shook hands with Denny.

Denny was employed at the ship-yard where the Tycoon was built. Indeed, he had had a hand in designing the craft. I became acquainted with him at the time of ordering the yacht, and took a liking to him. He was in a position to set the time for his summer vacation and had been invited to help man the sloop during the trip to the Straits.

We were in the cabin, again talking over our plans when, at sound of a footfall on the wharf, I stepped out into the standing-room.

On the dock stood Mr. Alvord. He beckoned me to come ashore. His face was clouded.

"Hugh," he said, "I want to see your father, and I want to see him very badly."

"My father is away from home."

"So the old fellow up at the house just told me. But where is he, if you know?"

I could only answer that I did not know. I was surprised that my father's confidential adviser was not better informed. He spent fully half an hour quizzing me along the line of probabilities, but there was little help I could give him. He was manifestly very anxious, but when I intimated, mildly, as became a youth whose father was a marvel of reticence, that I would like to know what the fuss was about, he evaded the issue.

During our talk we had walked back to the house, and I had shown him my father's colorless letter. As he was about to re-enter his buggy he paused with his foot on the step and beckoned me to approach again, at the same time casting a look of doubt at Harvey Brott, who was lurking about the horse's head with a show of holding the animal in check.

"You are going up the lakes for a cruise," he observed, gnawing his stubby mustache. "Do you want to do something for your father and me?"

I did, of course, and said so. He lowered his voice, and added:

"You have heard of your uncle, your father's half-brother, Silas Lupton, I presume."

"Not frequently of late years. He keeps a hotel at Algonac, I believe. I have never visited his place."

"Well, I want you to do so. I want you to stop at Algonac with your yacht. Don't take anybody into your confidence there, but find out all you can about Silas Lupton. I won't mince words about it. You will find that his reputation is bad. What I want to know is just what he is about at this time. You know that he keeps a hotel. You may learn something else. We'll see how sharp you can be."

"I'll be as sharp as I can," I promised, unable to help smiling a little.

I was mystified, but I did not ask useless questions. After he had instructed me to write to him from Algonac he was off.

The Tycoon reached Algonac in due course, and came to anchor in the river. Denny pulled me ashore in the sloop's dingey. I registered and had dinner at the Riverside Hotel, my doubtful uncle's hostelry. It was not a place of the first class, and the meal I had, I thought, was inferior to the one I would have had if I had dined on board the yacht. Not having seen my father's half-brother in several years I was not at all certain of being able to recognize him. Inquiry of the clerk in a casual way elicited the statement of fact that the proprietor of the place was getting ready for a trip and that his son was with him. I had forgotten all about my cousin. He was, as nearly as I could remember, a few months older than myself.

I am afraid that I was not born to become a successful detective. I did not make much progress in the business of finding out things about the hotel-keeper, though I prosecuted my casual inquiries in several directions after leaving the place. All that I arrived at was a firm conviction that the natives of Algonac were averse to talking about him. They seemed to be afraid of the subject.

They manifested no particular disinclination to discuss the affairs of anybody else. Some of them smiled when I tentatively broached the subject on my mind, and others looked at me askance. My worthy uncle appeared to be an object of fear in some quarters, of dislike in others, and of distrust in all.

It was after having completed my secret service investigations and while I stood on the wharf signaling for Denny to come ashore with the dingey and ferry me back to the sloop, that a messenger boy on a bicycle brought me the telegram which the reader has seen in my possession on board the sloop. It was in response to the request of Mr. Alvord, as has been related, that the Tycoon started to return to Detroit. The history of the calm and the fog, together with the circumstances involving the collision between the Mackinaw liner and the strange schooner, have been sufficiently dwelt upon.

The minute I realized what had happened to the sailing vessel I cast off the Tycoon's main sheet, allowing the boom to swing free. Then I ran forward and tumbled the anchor

overboard. Lake St. Clair is shallow, even in the ship channel,* and the iron was not long in finding a place on the bottom where it could bite. As I ran aft again Perry and Denny came tumbling up into the standing-room, fully clad, having instinctively snatched up jackets and tarpaulin hats as they sprang from their bunks. We hauled in on the painter of the tender and put off without exchanging a word. Of all the perils of the inland seas, that of collision is the most dreaded, as it is the most frequent. My associates comprehended exactly what had happened, before the crash of the collision ceased to resound in their ears.

The distance from the Tycoon to the scene of disaster was not more than a hundred fathoms, but the night and the thickening fog had blotted out even the steamer's lights. At the moment of pushing off we had to judge of the situation of the colliding craft by aid of sound alone. The cries of alarm

*The ship channel through Lake St. Clair is an artificial deep water-way 800 feet wide and 20 feet deep, extending from the mouth of the St. Clair River through the famous Flats, or half-submerged lands, to the head of the Detroit River.

which stirred us to action continued to ring in our ears as we approached the spot. I had the tiller ropes, and my companions made the dingey leap over the smooth water. In a moment the schooner loomed up through the damp obscurity of the night. I gave the word, and the boat's headway was checked. We came to a stand-still at a half-length from the schooner's side.

The whole fore part of the schooner above water was a wreck. Her bowsprit had been carried away, and with it her headsails and foretopmast which, with the foretopsail, hung dangling aloft by the topmast rigging. Her starboard bow was stove and the bulwark smashed in. In sheering off to avoid the sloop the steamer had struck the schooner a glancing blow. The impact had forced the latter's head around, and she was now drifting broadside to the current. Before the steamer's speed could be slackened the big liner had brushed past the schooner, her sharp prow cutting off the sailing vessel's horn as a woodman lops off a branch with an ax. The larger craft had then torn her way through the rigging of the smaller. She had

now come to a stand-still over beyond the schooner, and her people were shouting to ascertain the extent of the damage they had wrought. We could hear them calling out, hailing the deck of the schooner. The schooner's people were making noise enough with their lungs, but they were not answering the solicitous inquiries from the other vessel.

It was evident that panic ruled on the schooner's deck. There appeared to be no immediate danger of the craft's sinking, and I could not understand it. I determined to board her, and gave the request to lay the dingey alongside. As the request was obeyed, a man who had been balancing himself on the schooner's rail amidships made a flying leap, landing in the tender, nearly falling upon Dennis Cleary and coming within a notch of upsetting the little craft.

"What are you about, you sea-horse?" roughly demanded Denny, who was incapable of measuring his speech when excited.

"Save me!" gasped the stranger, clutching the Tycoon's crew around the neck and spilling his hat overboard.

Denny pushed him back into the stern sheets and went after his hat.

The stranger was a big and burly man. I asked him to sit still and not upset the boat, and then fastened upon the rail of the schooner and boarded her.

A scene of wild confusion greeted my gaze. From where I stood amidships on the starboard side, I had a view of the deck forward and aft, though the fog made objects indistinct. At the stern a man or a boy, I could not then tell which, was just turning from the head of the companion stair, and in his hand he bore a lighted lantern. At the taffrail were four or five men struggling with the tackle-falls of a boat which they were trying to launch. They seemed to be making bad work of it. Everybody was giving orders which nobody was obeying, and none of them appeared to be in authority. It did not look as though they would be able to accomplish their purpose, and I hoped they would not, for by this time I could see that there was no danger of the vessel sinking. I turned my gaze forward. Here appeared a heap of wreckage, and two men were claw-

ing at it with an exhibition of frantic energy that plainly told that there was some one buried beneath it. Here help seemed to be most wanted, and I ran forward to lend a hand.

As I came up they succeeded in dragging out from beneath the tangled debris the inanimate form of a man, and both the uninjured ones bent over him. I followed suit. So intent were the pair on their scrutiny that at first they did not notice me.

"Fetch the lantern here, Tony," one of them called; and the person who had emerged from the companionway approached.

"Is he dead?" I asked, gazing with awe upon the recumbent form.

As I spoke I noticed the other stranger start and look intently at me, but it was too dark to distinguish anybody's features.

"That's what I want the light for—to find out if he's dead," said the man who had spoken, answering my question.

He took the lantern from the newcomer, a boy, and bent closer over the injured man.

We all did likewise, forming a little circle of faces in the light.

I was conscious that the eyes of the man beside me who had not yet spoken were fastened upon my face, rather than upon that of his injured associate. At that instant, as the light from the lantern illumined my countenance, he uttered a half-articulate cry of alarm and sprang to his feet. Without waiting even to glance at the injured man he turned on his heel and virtually ran from the spot.

CHAPTER IV.

Captain Tiptop Takes Command.

"Are these people crazy?" was the impatient thought that occurred to me when the stranger jumped up and ran away at the mere sight of my countenance. The episode made me forget for the moment the wounded man on the deck. I saw the timorous stranger turn down the companion-stair and disappear below decks.

In the meantime the man who had taken the lantern was bending over the prostrate figure on the planking. He confined himself to looking and muttering, apparently too bewildered to do anything.

"Go and get us a cupful of water," I suggested to the boy who had brought the light.

He went aft somewhere and returned with a tin dipper full, the contents of which I dashed in the face of the injured man,

whereat he fetched a long breath, like a sigh. He showed no marks of a hurt, though there was no telling what might be the matter with him in regions not visible to the eye. Still, I thought there was no danger of his case resulting fatally so I left the boy standing over him and went aft to where the five men were still struggling with the tackle-falls of the boat.

Silence had by this time fallen upon the schooner's decks, but the cries of a man on the bridge of the Mackinaw liner could still be heard in no gentle inflections, demanding to know whether we were all dead on board the damaged craft. As his anxiety was only natural, and as he was entitled to a statement, I took the liberty of answering him.

"How are you hurt?" he had three or four times repeated.

"Bow stove above the water line and head rigging carried away," was the answer I gave him.

I was about to add that we had one man hurt, when, glancing back over my shoulder I saw the injured stranger rise to a sitting posture.

At sound of my voice the men at the boat paused in the act of letting go the tackle-falls, and now they were looking at me.

"What are you fellows going to do?" I demanded.

"We're going to get out the boat—you've got eyes, ain't you?" one of them responded surlily.

"Ahoy, the schooner!" the man on the steamer's bridge called out again.

"On board the steamer," I answered.

"What craft is that?"

One of the crew responded: "Schooner Sebewa, of Toronto."

"Better get out your anchor, if you've got one. You're drifting into shoal water," added the voice on the bridge.

"You hear, don't you?" I asked of the surly man. "You'd better lay forward, every man of you."

They went, though without any overt display of alacrity. I followed, driving them before me.

By this time I was able to infer something of the status of affairs on board the schooner, and subsequent developments proved that

my deductions were not far amiss. The man sitting on the deck who had been hurt was the commander of the craft, and the man who was now with him was the mate. The burly man who had jumped down into the Tycoon's tender and the boy who had brought the lantern from below were plainly passengers. The skipper had been injured in some manner at the moment of the collision, and rendered unconscious. The mate, instead of giving immediate attention to the vessel and her crew, had set about succoring his superior. The eyes of both officers off them, the men had gone about caring for their own welfare, as they understood it. They did not seem to take kindly to my interference, and on the whole I could not censure them.

As we passed forward—the crew and myself—I saw that the skipper had managed to get up on the fore-hatch, where he was sitting with the mate's arm around his shoulders. The sufferer did not seem to have regained complete consciousness, even yet. Obeying my brisk commands, the crew pulled aside the wreckage at the bow and got the

anchor overboard. I then ordered them to try the pumps, located one near each mast. Half a dozen strokes with the brake proved the truth of my supposition—the schooner had not taken a drop of water.

"She's as tight as a drum," said one of the men; and his tone showed that he had recovered from his panic. The others appeared now to be equally sensible. I might have humiliated them by a reminder that if the vessel had gone to the bottom she would not have gone much farther down than the level of her decks; but of course I held my peace.

During operations at the pumps we heard the gong in the engine-room of the Mackinaw liner clang out, and in a moment the vessel had passed out of sight in the night and fog. There was no reason for detaining her, unless it were to ascertain whether there was a physician on board; and I thought it was the mate's place to act in such a case. Nevertheless, I expected to hear the mate give utterance to strong language, as is the practise of mariners in such a case. He did

start to his feet as though to call out, but the skipper interposed.

"Let her go; we don't want any of them to board us," was his speech.

During this time my companions in the dingey were lying alongside. Knowing that they would like to be informed as to how things were going on the schooner's deck I walked over to the rail to speak with them. In the meanwhile the boy whom I had heard addressed as Tony had come aft and was engaged in an animated dialogue with the burly man who had boarded the tender.

"I tell you for the last time, Tony, you'd better jump into this boat before the schooner sinks," I heard the latter declare.

"But you won't, Tony, if you have any proper regard for my feelings or for your own welfare," Dennis Cleary interposed. "This gentleman may be as wise as the weather man, and maybe he knows that the schooner is sinking. If he does he's got a corner on all the knowledge that's going. But if he has the wisdom, I have an oar, and I'll smite you with it, Tony, just as sure as

you attempt to board us. We've got our full complement of passengers now."

"Do you want to see him drown?" demanded the burly man.

"G'wan! the schooner ain't sinking, and I ain't going to leave her for nobody," exclaimed the boy at the rail.

"Spoken like a hero!" cried the Tycoon's crew. "That's the way Casabianca talked—the boy that stood on the burning deck—and they wrote poetry about him."

"Oh, g'wan!" repeated the youth addressed.

I broke in upon this interesting discourse to ask my associates to wait a short while longer for me. I saw that the skipper was making an attempt to gain his feet unaided, and I hastened forward again to help him. The mate had left him, and was with the crew, gathered in the waist. By the time I reached the skipper he had struggled to a standing posture.

"Are you badly hurt, sir?" I asked, giving him my arm.

"Ribs stove," was the short response, accompanied by a groan.

He pressed his hand against his right side and half doubled himself up. I began to fear that I had made a mistake in not detaining the steamer.

"You ought to have a doctor at once," I said, with energy. "I'll have my boat pull back to the Flats and we'll have a physician here in no time."

"I don't want any doctor," he answered stubbornly; and then he fell into a tirade of abuse, directed against the vessel that had run him down. I concluded that a man who could blaspheme with the vigor he manifested stood in no immediate danger of dissolution. Finally he ceased raving, and for the first time raised his head and took a good look at me.

"Hold up that light," he commanded, wagging his head at the lantern which the mate had left on the deck near by.

I picked it up.

"Hold it higher," he ordered.

Understanding now what he wanted, I raised it to a level with my face. He gazed up at me long and earnestly.

CHAPTER V.

Personality of Captain Eckert.

While the skipper of the Sebewa studied me I had a good chance to study him. He was a thin and undersized man, of middle age apparently. His complexion, in a state of health, seemed to be of the sallow order. Just now, pain having driven the blood back to his heart, he was ghastly-looking. His eyes were small and black, and they glistened like those of a mink. Taken altogether, he was not a prepossessing looking personage.

"Who are you, and where did you come from?" he demanded, breaking in upon my reflections. "I don't believe I ever saw you before."

"I have no recollection of ever having seen you before. I am from the sloop-yacht you must have noticed to starboard. When the steamer dodged past us and ran you

down we came to your assistance—my friends and I."

"That was the proper thing to do," was his observation; but the words were uttered in a way that showed he was thinking of something besides the service rendered him. "A sailor with a sailor's gizzard in him is always ready to help a man in trouble," he went on; and all the time he did not remove his eyes from my face.

"I am not a sailor, but a yachtsman," I said, because I could think of nothing else to say.

"Well, it's all one, as they say in Paris. Ever been to Paris?"

"No, sir, I have never been to Paris."

"Better take a trip to Montreal some time, then; that's the next best thing to do."

I saw that he was talking to gain time to collect his faculties which, in truth, must have been considerably disturbed by the rap he had received from a big splinter from the bulwark rail, which had laid him low. While he voiced the last words his gaze turned toward his crew.

"Those fellows were going to desert me

when they thought the schooner was going down—the hounds!" he declared. "They're no sailors. Just a gang of Canucks I picked up at—well, that I picked up. I'm an American; my flag's the Stars and Stripes, and I'm worth a ship-load of Canucks if my ribs are stove."

"The mate stood by you," I reminded him. "He was doing his best for you when I came aboard."

"He was leaving the vessel to take care of herself—I know what he was doing. He's no better than the rest of them. He's a natural born clod-hopper, and he ought to be pitching hay, back on the farm where he came from."

He paused and groaned, and his hand went to his injured side again.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Captain—?" I began, and paused.

"My name's—Eckert," he said; and again he fastened his glistening black eyes on my face.

His manner convinced me that he had spoken the truth, though it manifestly was his first impulse to lie. I did not remember

that I had ever heard the name before. If he was fearful of being recognized, he was needlessly alarmed.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Captain Eckert?" I repeated, as he did not answer my question.

"I'm all right; I don't need any of your help," he declared, almost savagely, another and a severer twinge of pain catching him.

"Then I'll bid you good-night," and glad of the chance to get away, I turned to leave him.

"Hold on!" he cried. "You ain't going to desert me, are you?"

"What do you want me to do?" I asked, a little impatiently, for I thought that even his injury did not excuse his conduct.

"I want you to see to the schooner. I have no license to command you, I know that; I ask it of you as a favor. I can't trust that mate of mine in an emergency. He was shipped to help handle freight and keep his mouth shut, along with the rest of his farmer friends there. I want you to stay with me till daylight. We're in the channel yet, ain't we? No? Say, if you'll just take a hand-

spike and maul a little ginger into my farm-hands, and then see to it that they clear away this scrap-heap and repair damages, I'll be much obliged to you."

I murmured assent, and left him. Of course I did not attempt to maul the crew, but I did command them to lay forward. To my mild surprise the mate considered himself included in the general order, and obeyed with the others. Having put them to work I went aft to apprise my fellows in the sloop's tender of what was going on and to send them back to the yacht. While caring for the Sebawa it behooved me to remember that my own boat lay in the path of a disaster similar to that which had befallen the schooner.

The boy, Tony, was still in conversation at the rail with the burly man in the dingey. My companions had seen and heard enough to inform them as to the condition of affairs on board the Sebewa, but it was necessary to tell them that I could not yet leave the schooner. After they had boosted the bulky form of the timid passenger over the rail they pulled for the Tycoon.

Paying no attention to Tony and his father, I started to return to the forward deck. I passed around the open companionway, and as I did so glanced down into the lighted interior of the cabin. I was just in time to see a man—the same stranger I had discovered bending over Captain Eckert on the forward deck—draw back out of sight. He evidently had started to return to the deck, under the impression that I was leaving the vessel. Learning his mistake when he caught sight of me at the head of the stairs, he beat a hasty retreat. I heard him go into a stateroom and shut the door. I saw nothing of him but his legs, but it struck me that even they had a familiar look. I passed on my way, reflecting on the happening.

Captain Eckert had seated himself on the fore-hatch, with his knees drawn up and his arms doubled under him as a child does when it is in pain. The men at work clearing up the wreckage were making good progress.

"Don't you think you had better let me help you below, sir?" I inquired of the skip-

per; and I told him of having dismissed my boat for the time being.

"I guess I had better turn in," he agreed. "I'll leave you in charge of the schooner till daylight. I guess by that time I'll be able to take hold again."

I had my doubts, but I did not say so.

As we worked our way below he told me, in sentences frequently broken by gasps and groans, how the collision had caught him napping. He had gone below, leaving the mate in charge. He had only reached the foot of the companion-ladder when the hubbub raised on board the Tycoon to warn off the steamer reached his ears. Instantly apprehending danger, he had run on deck, and forward. He reached the bow just in time to receive the blow from the flying splinter which had laid him prostrate.

"That's all I remember till I came to and found you bending over me," he concluded.

We reached the foot of the companionway as he voiced this statement. I glanced about the cabin with a curiosity which I felt to be justified. The apartment was of ordinary appearance, not well fur-

nished nor overly clean in the eyes of a yachtsman. It was nearly square, occupying less than a quarter of the vessel's space below decks. A cushioned locker set up against the forward bulkhead, was broken in two places by doors that opened into the forward part of the vessel. Two other doors, one on either side of the companionway, gave each into a stateroom. Captain Eckert indicated that the starboard room was his, by turning me in that direction. I led him into the stuffy little apartment, and assisted him to lie down in his berth.

"Who occupies the other stateroom, Captain Eckert?" I asked, as I spread a blanket over him; for the fog, which had penetrated even into this closed apartment made the air damp and chill.

"What do you want to know for?" he demanded, with a recurrence of his savage tone and manner.

"I was merely wondering how you find accommodation for all your passengers," I answered mildly. "The man and the boy on deck and the gentleman I saw a minute ago, below here, are passengers, I take it. They

do not look like members of the schooner's company."

"You ought to know that sailing vessels on the Great Lakes don't carry passengers—even if you are nothing but a yachtsman," he retorted. "I don't mind telling you, though, that the man you saw on deck is my owner, and the boy with him is his son. As for any other man, I don't know what you're talking about. The other stateroom belongs to my mate."

"I see," said I carelessly; and left him.

CHAPTER VI.

What a Spy-Glass Revealed.

The first persons that engaged my attention when I regained the quarterdeck were the burly man and his son. They were standing in the starboard gangway between the rail and the trunk-cabin. When I led the skipper below, I noticed that they edged away from their position near the taffrail, as though they wished to avoid me. Having no thought but to humor them in their desire, if they had such a desire, I advanced along the port gangway. They were talking in a low tone, but ceased speaking as I went by with only the width of the trunk-cabin between us. As I walked away from them I heard my name distinctly uttered by the elder of the twain. At first I was puzzled, but reflected that the burly man must have made inquiry of Perry and Denny while he

was with them in the sloop's dingey. I glanced back over my shoulder and saw them go down into the cabin the minute the way was clear for them to do so.

The Sebewa's men, including the mate, were all this while working like dock laborers. The mate, now that he was in easy possession of his wits, seemed to know what to do better than I did, and I rather regretted having promised Captain Eckert not to leave the schooner before daylight. I qualify the statement of regret; for it was beginning to dawn upon me that there were curious things about the vessel, and I was not superior to a desire to know more about them.

I had told the men to get the fragment of the broken bowsprit on board, and to cut away and lower to the deck the depending section of the topmast. This request had been obeyed, and the snarled rigging had been cleared away. The men were gathered about their officer. The latter addressed me as I came up.

"What next?"

"Do you want orders or suggestions from me?"

"Whatever you like," affirmed the fellow indifferently.

He was a big, stoop-shouldered chap, to all appearances not more than four or five years older than myself—which is to say that he might have been twenty-one or twenty-two years of age. His "get-up" called to mind Captain Eckert's characterization of him. He was dressed like a farmer—in boots and overalls and a hickory shirt. He also wore a woolen Scotch cap pulled down till his ears stood straight out. He was a lout, but I had observed that he was gifted with enormous strength of muscle. His companions were rough-looking fellows in nondescript attire —typical foremast hands of the Lakes.

"Captain Eckert spoke of repairing damages, and there is plenty in that line to be done," I said, as it was plain that none of the party would make a move till I gave the word. "A couple of you set to work and splice the broken bowsprit together. You can repair it after a fashion by using cleats." I pointed to two of the men I wished to undertake this labor. "You may as well rig out something to bend your headsails on," I

added, for the benefit of the mate. "Let's see if you've got a spare stick aboard that will take the place of the broken topmast."

I turned to the fore-hatch. I wanted to learn the contents of the hold. As I laid hands on the hasp that held the bar across the hatch cover, a foot was thrust out, pushing my arm away. The foot was encased in a heavy boot. It belonged to the mate. I straightened up and looked at him.

"Keep out of the hold," said he, in an even but determined voice.

"Excuse me, but I have undertaken to do whatever may be necessary to get the Sebewa into trim. I am going below to look for a spar."

"You won't find a spare stick anywhere on board."

"Have you looked?" I persisted, eyeing him as narrowly as the darkness permitted.

"Never mind; I know all about it. You won't find any spare timber on board of her."

"This brings up the question I wanted you to decide a minute ago. Are you in command here just now, or am I?"

"I heard everything Captain Eckert said, and I suppose you are; but the captain didn't tell you to break into the hold."

He was so quietly persistent that my suspicions with regard to the schooner's character were strengthened. I was determined not to relinquish my object if I could accomplish it without a fight.

"I don't doubt your word, Mr. Mate," I said easily; "but being in command I interpret it as my duty to look after things for myself. You may possibly be mistaken, you know. As I am particularly anxious to have that spar I am going to look for it wherever I imagine it may be found."

While speaking I made a quick movement at the hasp, and succeeded in removing it before he could again interpose his foot. But now he jumped up on the hatch and planted both boots on the cross-bar. Naturally, I paused. Still he did not appear ruffled in temper, but there was that in his towering and bulky height to convey a warning. In addition, the other members of the crew began to press around, with mutterings. Obviously, if I persisted I stood in peril of

rough handling. I backed down as gracefully as possible.

"I'll refer the matter to Captain Eckert," I said, and went aft again.

My purpose was not to ask permission of the skipper to open the hold. I was satisfied that my misgivings with regard to the schooner were well founded. I intended to inform the skipper that I had repented of my promise to remain, and that I was going to leave the vessel. At the door of the captain's stateroom I paused with my hand upraised to deal a knock on the panel. Words I heard spoken inside the compartment made me falter.

The Sebewa's declared owner and his son were holding a conference with the skipper. I had heard all three of their voices when I came down the companion stair. As I drew up before the stateroom door these words, uttered in the voice of Captain Eckert, saluted my ears:

"Of course if I had known who he was I would not have asked him to take charge of the vessel."

A hush fell upon the three persons in the

room as my hand smote the panel. The skipper's voice called, "Come in," but I merely opened the door a little way. Captain Eckert was sitting up in his bunk, seemingly having forgotten his injury, so interested was he in the colloquy with his associates. These latter drew back out of sight behind the door. The skipper looked confused when he saw me, but regained his composure as I spoke:

"Captain Eckert, there seems to be no reason for me to remain with you any longer. Your mate is doing very well forward."

"You want to go back to your own boat?"

"I do."

"All right. I and my owner are both very much obliged to you for what you have done. I hope we'll meet again."

I hardly believed him, but I replied in kind; then closed the door and returned to the deck. With the horn, which one of the crew had repossessed himself of and was signaling with, I sounded a blast which my companions on board the Tycoon would understand. In twenty minutes more I was on board the sloop.

By this time it did not lack much of daylight, or rather the time for daylight; for the fog still covered the water and promised to veil the sun from view. But, contrary to expectation, a gentle breeze soon sprang up in the east and dispelled the mist. We got up our anchor, trimmed our sheets, and gradually drew away from the schooner. We had not progressed far when the Sebewa's people imitated our example, resuming their course.

My companions were naturally curious to know what had occurred on board the schooner after they left. While we got under way I told them nearly everything, dwelling upon the obstinacy of the mate in not permitting me to go down into the hold and upon the remarks made by the captain. They agreed with me that there was something queer about the schooner and her company. In my talk I carefully refrained from mentioning the man I had discovered bending over the inanimate form of Captain Eckert and of whom I had later caught a glimpse in the schooner's cabin. I wanted

to think independently about this occurrence.

My full attention was given to the yacht as soon as the recital was completed, for it was desirable to make the most of the breeze. Not for a moment had I forgotten the urgent summons from my father's agent, nor the mystery of my father's disappearance.

Perry, as we drew away from the schooner, went forward into the galley to prepare breakfast. He prided himself on his skill as a cook and never allowed anybody to interfere with his prerogatives. Denny, in an interval between pulls at the sheets, brought out the spy-glass from the cabin and gazed back at the vessel astern. All at once he said:

"I thought you told us Captain Eckert was badly hurt, and that you left him laid up in his berth. There he is, on deck."

I took the glass and had a look for myself. It was not the skipper Denny had discovered. I caught a glimpse of the man as he rounded the end of the trunk-cabin, walking forward. Denny's mistake was natural; for I had not described Captain Eckert mi-

nutely, nor, as just stated, had I said anything of the mysterious passenger in the cabin. The man I saw was taller than the captain, and better dressed. I did not get a good look at him till he came out from behind the screen of the foresail and upon the forward deck, where he stood looking upon the operations of the men who were working at the damaged bowsprit. He gazed off toward the sloop, seeming not to realize that his every feature would be revealed to a curious observer in the yacht's standing-room by the aid of a glass.

I was not altogether unprepared for the discovery I now made, but I was none the less bewildered. The well-dressed man on the Sebewa's forward deck was my father.

CHAPTER VII.

Miss Thyra Benson.

To say that I was puzzled by the presence and the conduct of my father on board the schooner would be phrasing it too mildly. Above all, what did his persistence in avoiding me while I was on board the vessel signify? As I could make nothing of it I held my peace, for there was no telling what hung in the wind.

You will not expect me to dwell upon each episode as I find it recorded in my log-book. It will be better to summarize here. We reached the wharf at home; Denny returned to his duties at the shipyard till such time as he should be informed that the cruise was to be again undertaken; Perry went home and I, for my part, made haste to visit Mr. Alvord at his office in the city. The interview was not a long one. I was deeply med-

itating upon it while I trudged along the highway toward home that afternoon, having a good distance to walk after leaving the street-car line. Nearing the house, I mounted the incline in the roadway, at the top of which were the gates opening into the grounds. Chancing to look back I saw a girl on a bicycle coming up behind me. As I looked the machine came to a standstill and the girl dismounted, being compelled by the steepness of the way to walk and trundle her wheel.

She was dressed in a cyclist's costume of blue and white—as I remember it, a blue skirt and a white waist, with a blue and white cap. Not to make a mystery where there was none, she was Thyra Benson, Perry's sister. I thought a great deal of Perry. I did not think less of his sister; for she was jolly and sympathetic—a blonde and rather plump. Perry used to provoke her in some of their wit combats by allusions to fat people. She was not fleshy, but she was touchy upon the subject, in the abstract. She could appreciate a good-natured joke as well as

the next one, and could be very sensible when the occasion demanded it.

I descended the slope to meet her and take the bicycle. I saw by her demeanor that Perry had been talking to her of my troubles, and I was glad of it. We turned into the driveway and sought out one of the rustic benches under a big elm tree. I stood the machine against the trunk of the tree and took a place beside her.

"I was so sorry to learn that you had to come back to the city," she said. "I saw you leave—I was watching the sloop from one of the upstairs windows at home; and while I expect to go to Mackinaw with father and mother this summer, I could not help wishing I were a boy, too. I should enjoy a two-weeks' trip in a yacht. Traveling by steamer now-a-days, father says, is like living in a hotel; and that is just why I do not like it."

"We expected to have a fine time, but I am afraid I shall not make any more trips in the Tycoon," I said.

"I understand—that is, I understand something about it, but not all. If it is not a private matter I would be glad to have

you tell me. Of course I do not expect to be able to advise you; but if, in your father's absence, you care to talk to my father, I am sure he will be interested."

"I am afraid the matter will not interest you a great deal, Thyra. It is about a mortgage."

She looked puzzled, naturally; and I made haste to add:

"I have just been told by my father's lawyer that we stand in danger of losing our home, my father and I. This place, Mr. Alvord has discovered, is covered by a mortgage given by mother to secure a note for a large amount which is held by my father's half-brother, Silas Lupton."

"I did not know that you had any relative besides your father. I never heard you speak of Silas Lupton before."

"I had almost forgotten his existence. Father seldom alluded to him—never at all of late years. Mr. Lupton keeps a hotel at Algonac. I always inferred that he and father were not on good terms. You can judge of my surprise when I learned of the

mortgage, and especially in whose favor it was drawn."

"Your uncle is about to foreclose the mortgage—is that the trouble? You see that I know what the possible effect of giving a mortgage is."

"It is possibly not quite so bad as I have led you to think. The mortgage does not fall due for two months."

"Then you will be able to raise the money to meet it, even if you cannot arrange with your uncle. Or are you afraid that your father will not return in time and that you will be unable to find him?" and at this thought she looked really troubled.

"It probably would not be difficult to find my father," I returned, thinking of the passenger on board the Sebewa. "It is for a very large sum, however, and there is a good deal of unpaid interest to meet. The outlook is gloomy enough to make Mr. Alvord glum, and I do not feel a bit more cheerful, as a matter of course."

She was silent for some time. She was too sensible to attempt words of comfort that might be based on nothing more sub-

stantial than idle sympathy. I could see that she was not wholly satisfied with my statement of the case.

"It is odd that your father never should have told you of this," she observed, at length.

"Not so strange as that he never should have told even his lawyer," I reminded her. "You know, my father never did take me into his confidence."

"Then, as Perry said, you do not know where your father is?"

I was silent, leading her to believe that she had understood aright. This was not exactly straightforward dealing; for the implied answer was true only in letter, not in spirit.

"Perhaps, after all, he has a plan, and you and Mr. Alvord are worrying needlessly," she went on.

I could only reply that I hoped so, but I felt that there was better reason to doubt than believe it.

"If your father kept the affair such a close secret how did the lawyer learn of it?" was Thyra's next question.

"The day before Perry and Dennis Cleary and I started for Mackinaw he received a letter from Silas Lupton telling him about it. Yesterday he received another letter in which Mr. Lupton says he intends to take immediate possession."

"Before the mortgage falls due? I do not know a great deal about business matters, Hugh, but I never heard of such a thing as that."

"He has my father's permission to do so. He enclosed a written statement to that effect in his last letter. The permit was signed by father. It was to tell me of this that Mr. Alvord called me back to the city. I examined the permit sent by Mr. Lupton, and there can be no doubt that it is genuine."

For an interval Thyra was again silent. You will have noticed that, in spite of the intelligence and appreciation she revealed, I was not led to tell her all I knew. I had not told even Mr. Alvord of my father's presence on board the strange schooner at the time of the collision. The reason was based on the written permit from my father which Silas Lupton had enclosed with his

letter. The wording of it was such that I felt he was perfectly easy in mind as to what the outcome of his trouble would be, and I believed that there was to be discerned, between the lines, a desire on his part to have his actions in the premises not too closely scrutinized.

"You have not mentioned," said Thyra, breaking the silence, "whether Mr. Lupton has stated when he is coming. When do you expect him?"

Before I could answer, the sound of horses' hoofs on the plank bridge spanning the gutter where our driveway joined the high road was borne to our ears. The next moment a hack came tearing along the driveway and passed the spot where we stood, having risen at the sound. So rapidly did the vehicle go by that we merely caught a glimpse of the driver, with two trunks beside him on the foot-board.

There was no need for further remark. I accompanied Thyra to the gate.

"Perry has frequently spoken of inviting you to come to our house to stay," she remarked significantly, while I held the

wheel for her to mount. "We have often remarked that it must be lonesome for you here when your father is away."

I thanked her with a smile, and she darted down the slope. As she sped around the corner she looked back with a smile and an expression which I felt was intended for one of encouragement.

I walked up to the house. The hack was turning away when I reached the steps. On the veranda were the two trunks, and in the library I heard voices. I stepped to the open door.

It is my endeavor to tell a straightforward story of some rather singular happenings. With due regard for the natural development of events, it is no part of my purpose to deal in surprises. I was not altogether unprepared, and I do not believe the reader will be, for the discovery I now made.

The newcomers in the library—my uncle and his son—were the man and the boy I had seen on board the schooner Sebewa—the burly man who had shown so much terror at the time of the collision, and the boy whom the latter had addressed as Tony.

CHAPTER VIII.

Cousin Tony and Captain Tiptop.

Silence fell upon the group in the library when I presented myself at the door. The coterie was composed of Silas Lupton, his son, Tony, and my father's servants, Harvey Brott and his wife. As nearly as I could make out from the fragment of conversation, caught as I approached, the two latter were bidding the newcomers welcome, and their tones displayed more cordiality than those with which they had ever greeted my own home-coming. I detected a degree of familiarity between the "guests" and the servants which prepared me in a measure for developments that were shortly to follow.

I had presented myself without taking thought of how I should act. It appeared that my uncle was better prepared. He strode forward with outstretched hand to

greet me. I affected not to see the hand, and he dropped it, with a covert glance at Harvey Brott.

"Your uncle, Mr. Lupton," said Brott to me.

"Yes; I understand. Mr. Alvord, my father's lawyer, prepared me for your coming."

"And this is your cousin Tony," supplemented my uncle, indicating the boy, who stood in the background, regarding me with a grin on his flabby face, and his hands in his pockets. He did not offer to give me his palm; for he could not fail to profit by his father's experience.

Probably I looked as inhospitable at that moment as a boy can well look. Unless I was much mistaken, Harvey Brott and my uncle were rather pleased than otherwise at my dissatisfaction.

"Harvey and Mrs. Brott will see to it that you are made comfortable," I said formally, and went on my way upstairs.

In my own room I sat down to reflect. Did my uncle and his son remember me as the yachtsman who had boarded the Sebewa af-

ter the collision? They did; for my name had passed between them. But they had given no visible sign of the fact. Their attitude was unmistakably one of covert hostility toward me, and they had arrayed the Brotts on their side. I wondered if, when my relatives announced to Mr. Alvord their intention of taking up their abode at my father's house, they had not been informed that I was going on a cruise. The fact that I had returned, I was satisfied, was displeasing to them. Though they had been on the premises not more than fifteen minutes, they, to my perception, had already imparted a frigid effect to the atmosphere.

What their course of action was to be, I was not long in finding out. They made themselves at home with a readiness that was a marvel and a disgust to me. That evening my uncle smoked his after-dinner cigar in the library in my father's easy chair, and Tony had every room upstairs save mine depleted of its pictures and ornaments to adorn the apartment he appropriated for himself. My only comfort was that I was left alone. Indeed, so completely was I left alone that

there was no mistaking the fact that henceforth I was to be ignored as much as possible.

My cousin, Tony, had proved to be a youth of an inquiring turn of mind. I heard him going over the house that evening from cellar to garret; and, apparently unable to contain his curiosity till daylight, he extended his explorations to include the outdoor premises. I heard him pass along the walk under my window, and though I was trying to read I raised my head to listen to his footsteps. He passed around the corner of the house and took to the greensward. He was evidently heading for the path that led to the Tycoon's wharf. A thought came to me that impelled me to lay down my paper, put on the cap and jacket I wore in the boat and follow him. When I came down on the wharf I found him in the yacht's standing-room working with a bunch of keys at the lock on the cabin doors.

It was not a dark night; the sky was clear and the moon, nearly at the full, was as near the zenith as it ever gets. The expression on my cousin's face as he turned toward me

when I jumped down beside him was plainly visible. He looked neither startled nor put out by my appearance.

"What are you trying to do there?" I sharply demanded, regarding the bunch of keys.

"Nothing! Just looking the boat over. Open these doors, will you?"

His tone was one of command rather than of request, and naturally I responded that I would not.

"Oh, well, you needn't get up on your ear nor swell out your chest at me," he responded coolly. "I could get in there if I wanted to."

But he put the bunch of keys back in his pocket.

"What did you want to get in there for?" I asked, unable to make up my mind whether my cousin was knavish or merely boorish.

"I told you. I'm just looking around. I'm kind of sizin' things up, if you really want to know."

There was no mistaking what he meant, and the blood surged to my temples.

"You need not include the Tycoon in your

inventory," I said as calmly as I could. "This boat is my private property, and she is not included in the estate."

"Oh, I don't know," he returned, in the tone and manner of the street. "You're a minor, and what's yours is your father's. Pa says so, anyway. I may own this boat myself before long."

"Your father is mistaken if he thinks I haven't the ownership of this boat secured," I returned, controlling my temper, and wondering how I did it.

"Are you going out for a sail?" he next inquired, noticing my nautical get-up.

"I am going to take the Tycoon up to the ship-yard, where I generally moor her at night for safe keeping."

"You don't think I'd steal her, do you?"

"Certainly not," was my answer; and of course I meant what I said.

There was no disputing that my agreeable cousin was bent on picking a quarrel with me. I did not desire to accommodate him just then, if I could avoid it.

"I always leave the sloop at the ship-yard, Tony," I added, "unless I pass the night on

board of her. There have been several boats rifled by river thieves in this neighborhood lately, and I don't like to leave my boat unguarded."

While speaking I went forward, and leaping to the wharf cast off the fast that held the sloop's head to the pier.

"Why don't you sleep on board the boat, then, instead of taking her to the ship-yard? I bet the bunks in her are as comfortable as a bed in a first-class hotel."

"I intend to make a call on a friend of mine that lives up that way, and I may stay all night with him," I answered, determined to satisfy my cousin, if soft words would do it.

By this time the current had caught the sloop's bow, which was pointed up-stream, and was veering her around. I made haste to cast off the stern fast also, and I leaped aboard. Tony made no movement to go ashore. I reached out and caught hold of the cap-sill of the wharf, holding the boat in position, while I looked back over my shoulder at him.

"Why don't you let her go?" he asked. "I'm going with you."

"You are not going with me," I returned quietly, but with decision.

"I'd like to meet your friend," he added. "I'll want to get acquainted some, seeing that I'm going to live here."

I let go the wharf and stepped up to him.

"Ashore with you, lively! I don't care for your company to-night."

I was not mistaken in the estimate I had formed of him. My tone and manner were sufficiently threatening, and he scrambled over the combing and leaped to the wharf.

"That's all right," he shouted back; "but I'll be sailing that boat on my own hook some day—mind that!" And then, as I paid no attention to him—"A pretty sailor you are, to cast off from the dock before you get any sail up. You must be a regular green-horn."

I had not hoisted sail because the wind was off shore and very light and the trees at the head of the wharf shut off what little breeze there was. While the sloop drifted I ran up the mainsail and jib. As soon as I

got up from the lee of the grove the canvas filled. I headed the sloop up the stream and a little off shore. All the time during these maneuvers, Tony retained his position near the head of the wharf and hurled contumely at me, but, as in the beginning, I paid no attention to him.

The sloop had not made much progress against the current, and the wharf was still in plain view, when I crossed the course of a small boat. It had but one occupant, and he ceased rowing as I drew near. He either was inordinately afraid of being run down, or he did not wish to approach close enough for me to see who he was.

Something in the appearance of the boatman, even with his back turned in my direction, impressed me as being familiar. I passed him by, and looked back. I saw him drift some time longer and then resume his oars. He headed for the shore and the shadow of the trees near the wharf. I also saw Tony Lupton come down the river bank to meet him; and though I could not be certain at that distance, I believed that Tony shook

hands with the stranger when the latter stepped ashore.

CHAPTER IX.

A Sentinel and a Spy.

It was nine o'clock by the time I reached the ship-yard. I moored the sloop to a stake and pulled ashore in the tender.

The watchman on night duty at the yard had seen me coming, and he was on hand to haul up the boat when I landed. I exchanged a few words with him, and he let me out at the gate in the high board fence that skirted the ship-yard on all but the water side. The watchman seemed desirous of detaining me in conversation, but I was in a hurry. It was getting late, and I intended to call on Perry on my way home.

There was a light in Perry's window at the side of the house. As I wished to talk with my chum privately I adopted the time-tried expedient of casting gravel stones up against the window panes. In a moment

Perry came down stairs. We took a seat on the edge of the sidewalk, and I told him of the day's events, concluding with the scene with Tony just before I left. He remarked that the fact that Silas Lupton and his son had proved to be the passengers we had seen on board the schooner Sebewa was "singular," but seemed to attach no special importance to it.

"I am sorry they are going to make it disagreeable for you," he said, referring to my relatives; and he urged me to "take up my quarters" with him.

"And leave them a clear field on the premises? I have a better plan than that."

"You speak as though you suspect your uncle and his son of something."

"I mean to keep a close eye on them. I am going to lead them to believe, though, that they have driven me away. I am going to take up my quarters on board the Tycoon after to-night."

"By the way," said Perry abruptly, "speaking of the sloop reminds me. Have you heard about Denny? No? I thought

maybe you heard it at the ship-yard. Our fellow cruiser has disappeared."

"Disappeared! How long since?"

"Well, he returned to the yard after leaving the Tycoon to-day, remained there a few minutes and then obtained leave of absence for two hours. He failed to show up all the rest of the day, and his younger brother was over here about an hour ago to learn if I knew where he went. The youngster said that the last seen of Denny was at the yard, where he was talking with a couple of men who came up the river in a boat to buy a spar for a topmast. The men told somebody that they belonged to a schooner down the river."

Instantly, without exactly perceiving the connection, I thought of the Sebewa and then of the man in the small boat I had seen that night—the man who had landed near the Tycoon's wharf.

"What sort of looking men were they?"

"I can't tell you. All this I had from Denny's brother, the little chap who is always limping around bare-footed with a sore toe —you know him."

Perry did not think the disappearance of the Tycoon's "crew" a serious matter, and while I could not help feeling that somehow it was significant, I had to drop the subject. I took my leave of Perry and started home. The next day, I was resolved, I would remove my personal effects and take up my abode in the cabin of the sloop.

From the Benson's place to my home was only a short walk, but I had lost so much time earlier in the sloop, battling with the light wind and the river current, that it was late when I turned into the grounds. There was a light burning in the library, where I had last seen my uncle. One of the windows was half open, but the curtains were closely drawn. I held up my watch in the moonlight —almost twelve o'clock.

"Uncle Silas keeps late hours," was my thought; and I started to move on to the house.

At that juncture occurred a sound so peculiar that it made me halt again. Listening, I heard it once more. Unmistakably, it was a snore. There was somebody asleep in the shrubbery off to the left. A moment I stood

and pondered. It might be a tramp who had made his bed on one of the benches under the trees, but I thought not. Stepping off the graveled walk I made my way in the direction of the noise, which continued at rythmic intervals. My feet gave out no sound on the soft turf, and I did not hesitate to closely approach the sleeper.

He was sitting on the same bench that Thyra Benson and I had occupied earlier that day. One arm he had thrown over the back of the seat, and the other lay across his lap. His head was hanging across his breast, and his hat had fallen to the ground between his feet. There was no need to awaken the slumberer in order to identify him. He was my interesting cousin, Tony Lupton.

What Tony was doing there, aside from sleeping, I thought I could guess.

"Asleep at your post," I murmured; and then glanced toward the library windows.

To put my surmise to the proof, I determined upon a further investigation. Passing the sleeper without awakening him I made a detour around the house and reached the waterside at the point where, earlier in

the evening, the man in the row-boat had made a landing. As I expected would be the case, the boat was still there. I looked it over hurriedly, but thoroughly. It was a common-place craft, such as the lake and river freighters carry, and if I had ever seen it before that night, there existed no feature by which I could identify it. But I did not spend any long time examining the visitor's boat. It was the visitor himself that most interested me. I returned to the house.

I approached the building from the rear, avoiding the walk so that my footsteps might not be heard. By this time it was fully apparent, to me, at least, that underhand work of some sort was going on. There seemed to me to be no good ground for scruples against prying on my uncle and his visitor in the library, whoever he might prove to be.

As I walked softly toward the front of the house I heard somebody go up the steps and enter at the front hall door.

"The sentinel has awakened," was my thought.

Standing at the corner of the building I plainly heard Tony's report.

"No use to wait out there any longer," he declared in a rebellious voice. "He's going to be away all night, just as I said he would."

"Are you sure he hasn't come in the back way?" inquired another voice, not that of Silas Lupton, and the tones of which I thought I recognized.

"You haven't been asleep, have you, Tony?" inquired the voice of his father. "Your eyes look red."

"Ain't I got a cold?" demanded the sentinel. "Of course I ain't been sleeping."

"He ain't in his room, gentlemen," another voice put in—the voice of Harvey Brott.

"It's plain he's not coming back tonight," said my uncle, "and that leaves us a clear course."

"Let's take a look at the place, then, and I'll get back and report to the captain," spoke the fourth member of the party, the man of the row-boat, of course.

There was a general movement within the library. It should be needless to say that by this time I was considerably excited. What

were these interlopers on my father's premises going to look at, and why?

I heard Lupton, senior, command Harvey Brott to "take up the lamp." Then the gas was turned out and the whole party, manifestly, filed from the room in the wake of the man of all work. I attempted to follow the light, but it was carried back into the interior of the house and faded from my view. When, after circling the house again I still could not find it, I bethought me of the cellar, and the fact that there were no gas jets there, which would account for the lamp. There were wine cellars at the rear, and hither I turned.

Sure enough, streaming through the narrow grated apertures in the foundation walls of the house appeared a gleam of light. Ours was an old-fashioned house, and had an old-fashioned cellar. The windows were so narrow and so close up to the cellar ceiling that virtually nothing of the interior could be seen through them. It was imperative that I ascertain what Silas Lupton and his followers were doing. I cast about me for a means of obtaining a view, and quickly found one.

CHAPTER X.

The Crevice in a Door.

The cellar had an outside entrance, a stairway covered at the top with a pair of doors which could be lifted and laid back. They were secured only with a wooden button, and in a moment I had one of them open. The steep steps with the closed and locked door at the foot were disclosed to view in the moon-light. Through the chinks at the top and bottom of the door streamed light from the lamp which Harvey Brott had borne into the cellar to light the way of Silas Lupton and his associates.

I tip-toed down the steps, holding on by the edge of the door frame to guard against a stumble. The sound of voices was borne to my ears. When I put my ear to the chink at the top of the door I could plainly hear what was said.

"Set the light on the box, father," was the first speech that reached my ears distinctly; and again I told myself that I had heard that voice before and under different circumstances.

The speech was of course addressed to Brott. When I raised my head and put my eyes to the crevice, I got a look at the speaker. He stood so that he furnished me only a profile view, but my suspicions as to his identity were instantly confirmed. He was the mate of the Sebewa. He had addressed Harvey Brott as "father." Thus was revealed to me the probable connecting strand between all the members of the conspirators' company—Harvey Brott, his son, Captain Eckert and Silas Lupton.

In obedience to his son's mandate Brott deposited the lamp on an empty drygoods box near the foot of the kitchen stairs; and then he took a seat beside Tony, who had deposited his frame on one of the lower steps with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands, apparently about to succumb once more to slumber. I shifted my point of view so as to command the movements of Silas

Lupton and the mate. The pair stood in the middle of the cellar floor taking a general survey.

The cellar had not been used for years. It was littered with empty boxes and barrels, broken and wornout furniture and the hundred-and-one other worthless things which accumulate in such a place.

"That there door, Jesse, goes out into the back yard," said Harvey Brott to his son; and pointed to the portal at the foot of the outer stairs.

Jesse Brott and my uncle advanced in my direction, and I started to beat a retreat. For the first time the possibility of the conspirators making a sortie in my direction presented itself. A speech by my father's man-servant reassured me.

"No use to try it; it's locked tight," said he. "But I can open it when you get ready to use it."

"Does Hugh ever come down here?" my uncle next inquired.

"He ain't been down here in years. Nobody ever comes down here but me or the old woman; and that ain't often."

"We can nail up the door at the top of the kitchen stairs and put a new lock on this other door," said Jesse. "The only trouble is that we can't bring the stuff up from the river and down those outside stairs without leaving tracks. He will be apt to see them."

"I'll fix all them tracks," said Harvey Brott.

"If things go as I expect they will," added my uncle, "Hugh will not be around here to bother."

"I guess that'll be all right," said Jesse Brott. "All Captain Eckert wanted me to do was to take a look at the place and see if it is big enough to hold all the stuff, and whether we can get it in here without any of the neighbors catching on. I see there ain't anybody living within a quarter of a mile of this place, so that'll be all right, too. The captain says he'll have to leave the boy for you to take care of. He must remember seeing him on board the Sebewa, so you'll have to expect him to be a little suspicious."

"Tony and I'll take care of him; the captain needn't lose any sleep over that," was Silas Lupton's assurance.

I would have liked to learn just how he and Tony purposed to "take care" of me, though I thought I could guess.

Jesse seemed to be satisfied that the cellar would answer the purpose of the plotters, whatever that might be. All the talk heard so far did not throw much light on this important point. Of course this much was plain: A large amount of "goods" of some sort was secretly to be brought up from the river to my father's house. Where these goods were to come from was equally plain; from the hold of the schooner Sebewa.

Having told his father to clear out the cellar and get it ready to receive the goods, Captain Eckert's man headed the retreat from the place. It was necessary to shake Tony two or three times before that youth could be sufficiently aroused to get up and clear the stairway. The last thing I heard from the conspirators that night was an admonition from Jesse Brott to his father and to Silas Lupton to work in the cellar only at night, and to put black cloth screens over the windows.

While the plotters went up the inside

stairs I lowered the door over the outside steps, being careful to leave everything just as it had been found. What to do next was now the question. If there had been a boat available I would have waited in hiding for the mate and tried to follow him when he returned to his vessel. Again I looked at my watch—one o'clock. By this time the moon had sunk to the level of the tree-tops and the landscape was bathed in shadow.

I started to cross the lawn and gain the highway, directing my steps toward the edge of the grove so as to avail myself of its shadow and avoid a possible discovery by the mate when he should issue from the house. As I came out from the shadow of the building I was startled to see the figure of a man issue from behind the trunk of one of the near-by trees and move swiftly along the margin of the grove toward the road.

"Another sentinel," was my thought.

But as I looked at the fleeing figure the conviction seized me that the fellow was not a sentinel, but a spy. The celerity of his pace and the fact that he held straight away for the road seemed to prove it. Actuated

by an impulse that I did not attempt to analyze I gave chase.

With no thought now of being seen from the house in the increasing gloom I ran across the lawn so as to head off the spy if he meant to issue from the grounds and take the highroad to the city. That such was his intention became plain when he emerged from the grove and took a short cut across the open, making for the ornamental iron fence in front of the house. I caught a fleeting glimpse of him before he was swallowed up in the shadow of the fence. He was tall and spare, and wore a long-tailed coat and soft hat.

"I have you, now, my friend," I thought when I saw him pass into the shadow of the fence.

I was between him and the carriage gate, which was the nearest exit.

Reaching the fence I halted to look along its length. There was nobody in sight. He had not gone over. I had kept my eyes on the top line of the pickets, which was distinctly visible against the sky. Nevertheless, the fact was that he had vanished. Mys-

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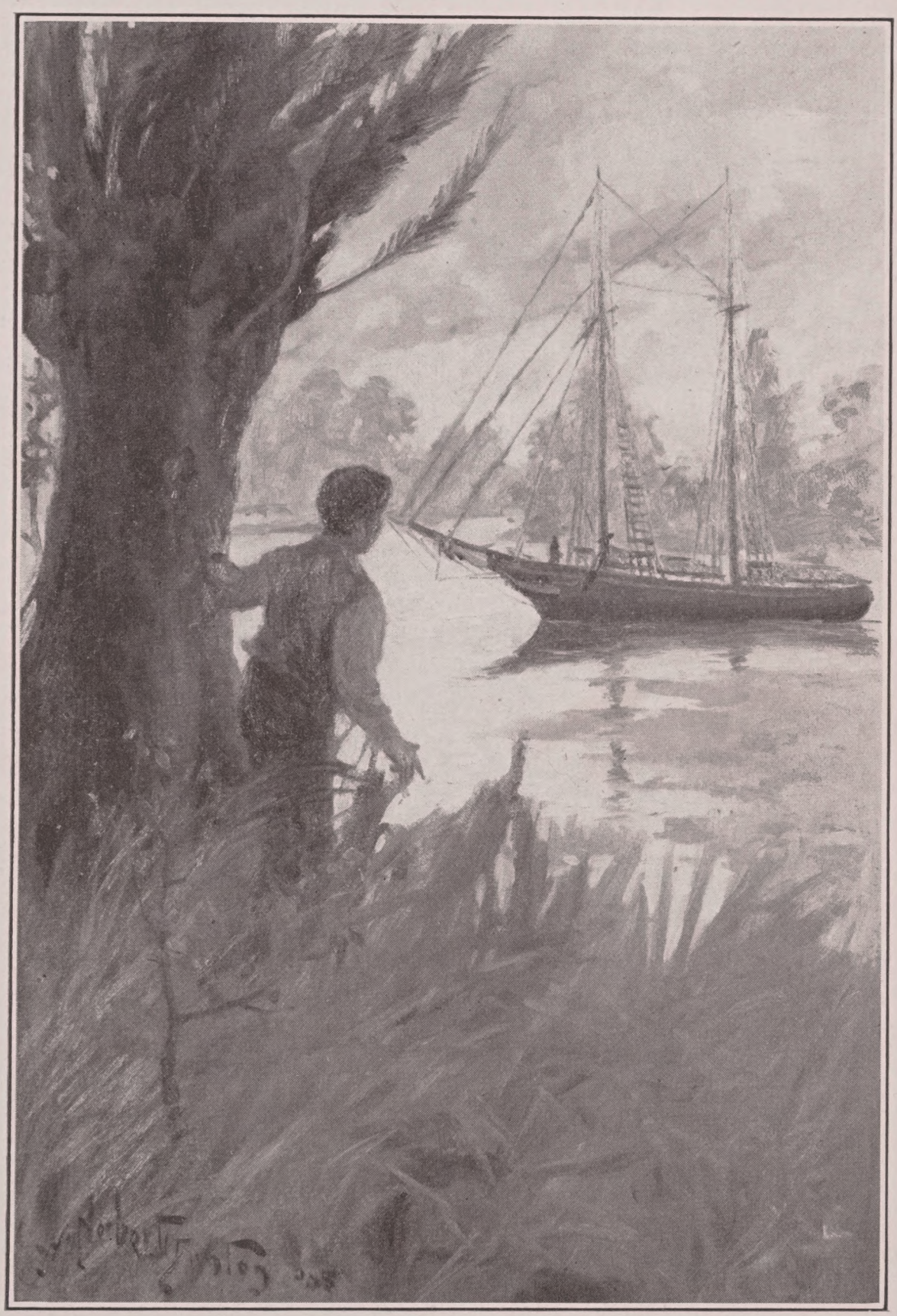
tified I walked along to the spot where I had caught the last glimpse of him. Here was found an explanation—the postern. I had forgotten about the small gate or door which footed a disused path terminating at this point. Never within my recollection, however, had the postern been opened. It was kept locked, and no key that I ever could get hold of would unlock it, and I had tried dozens when I was younger.

But the spy had a key to the postern; for it was now ajar and the lock was intact, as was quickly made manifest by an examination with a lighted match. While I was doubling on my course the stranger had found time to unlock the gate, if he had not left it unlocked when he entered. He had also had plenty of time to scurry across the road and take to the grove on the other side. That this was the direction of his flight was proved when I stepped through the postern. There was nobody in sight on the highway.



ALL THIS, DENNY OBSERVED AT A GLANCE.
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CHAPTER XI.

Denny's Adventures.

The watchman at the ship-yard must have been surprised that morning when, about the hour of two, he was called to the gate by the noise of a vigorous pounding, and opening it discovered that it was I, who had returned. But he made no remark when I told him that I purposed to spend the remainder of the night in the cabin of the Tycoon. It was my frequent practice to sleep on board the sloop, though I was in the habit of retiring at an earlier hour than this.

Recent events, culminating in the episode of the vanishing gentleman in the soft hat and the long-tailed coat, had so wrought upon me that I thought there would be little or no sleep for me that night. However, no sooner was I in my berth, than slumber overtook me. When I awoke the sun was shining

brightly through the blinds in the doors of the sloop's cabin, and while yet drowsy I became conscious of the presence of someone in the cabin with me. It was Dennis Cleary. He was seated on the edge of the berth opposite and grinning at me over the top of the center-board trunk.

"You must have been out on a bender last night, Captain Tiptop," said he cheerfully. "You've been sleeping like Abu-l-Hassan, the man in the Arabian Nights."

I sat up and asked what time it was.

"Nine o'clock. I've been in here two or three times before this, and once I even took the liberty to poke you in the ribs; but you only turned over and groaned."

"How did you get in?"

"Easily enough; you forgot to lock your door when you set sail for dreamland."

The events of the preceding night and day came back to me with force as I swung out of the berth and began dressing.

"Where were you yesterday and last night, Denny?"

Instantly his face lost its jocular expression, assuming one of labored earnestness.

"Thereby hangs a tale, Captain Tiptop, longer than the log-line of the Tycoon."

"I expected it."

"While you are having your breakfast I'll finish what I am doing up at the office, and then I'll come down and relate to you a tale that will make each individual hair of your head stand up like the bristles on a pig."

"I believe you have a sounder knowledge of the Arabian Nights than of Shakespeare," said I; but he was gone.

I washed down the Tycoon's deck and sponged out the standing-room while the kettle boiled in the galley. Then I cooked breakfast. The sloop's larder was full, thanks to the interrupted cruise, and I made as good a meal as though I had procured it at a hotel on shore. My troubles did not seem to have damaged my appetite, and I ate as heartily as I had slept. Barely had I cleared the folding board attached to the center-board trunk, called by courtesy a table, than Perry made his appearance. He had called at the house for me, and Harvey Brott had told him to look for me at the ship-yard. Of Silas Lupton and Tony, Perry had seen nothing; and

probably my relatives had slept as soundly as myself. Doubtless, too, they reposed in the ill-founded assurance that I was ignorant of their plots.

While I was engaged in giving Perry an inkling of what my adventures had been, as a sort of prelude to what Denny would have to tell, the Tycoon's "crew" returned to the yacht. As it turned out, Denny's adventures were as notable as mine had been. The best thing to do will be to tell the story straightaway, without the many digressions our jovial friend indulged in.

Denny, it seemed, had returned to the shipyard, and to work, the previous day after the Tycoon reached her wharf, and he was told that the cruise to Mackinaw might be considered indefinitely postponed. He was alone in the office when two men came pulling up the river in a yawl and landed at the yard. They had come to procure a spar for a schooner's topmast, and were directed to Denny, who listened to their application. The spokesman for the twain was one whom Denny described as a big, raw-boned fellow in nondescript attire. He told the ship-builder's ap-

prentice that he and his companion were from a schooner "down river." The raw-boned man was the mate.

While Denny and the mate went to pick out the spar, the mate's companion employed himself looking over the flotilla of yachts and yachts' tenders moored to the stakes off the yard. It struck Denny that the fellow was searching for some particular craft which he failed to see. He became sure of this when the man approached his superior and remarked in a tone loud enough for the apprentice to hear:

"I don't see nothing of no sloop big enough to be her."

"She may be down at the wharf," replied the mate, glancing at Denny.

"She was headed this way, anyhow," insisted the first speaker; "and cap'n said he wanted to know if she was here, so's she won't be in your way to-night."

"That'll be all right; I know what he said and what's wanted," was the short response. "Go take another look."

The sailor went back to the water's side, and the mate hastened after Denny.

The curiosity of the boy had been aroused. He began to study the visitor. It was not long before he became convinced that he had seen the fellow before. He tried to quiz the stranger about his vessel, but the man headed him off.

"How did your topmast come to be carried away?" persisted Denny.

"I didn't say it was carried away. We're going to fit her out new."

"Oh; then you want two sticks."

"No; I don't want two sticks, only a foretopmast."

"A funny-looking schooner you'll have, with only one topmast on her," was Denny's thought.

The visitor picked out and paid for a spar that suited him, and disdaining a workman's proffered assistance, shouldered the heavy timber as though it were a fish-pole and strolled off to the water's side with it. With their boat's painter he and his companion made a tow-line and affixed it to the larger end of the timber.

"We'll tow it down," said the mate, "but we want to leave it here for a while first."

In the ship-yard, in front of the door of the office, stood a tall flagstaff with the Stars and Stripes floating from the peak. The staff was fashioned in the likeness of a ship's mast, with top and topmast. Ascent could be made to the top by means of cleats nailed to the staff.

Denny watched the yawl containing the "raw-boned" man and his companion till the boat rounded a head of land and was lost to view. Then he went into the office and procured a pair of binoculars. Armed with the glass he climbed the flagstaff. Through the binoculars he saw the yawl descend the river to a point nearly opposite the wharf at which the Tycoon lay. He saw the strangers take a good look at the yacht from a distance, and then head about to return to the yard.

"I thought that was the sloop you were looking for," said Denny to himself; and he backed down the flagstaff.

Some time after the strangers had departed with the purchased spar trailing in the water astern of their boat, he saw the foreman of the yard and left word for his

employer that he was going for a pull down the river and might be gone two hours. When, seated in a shallow skiff, he rowed out upon the river, the yawl was a mile distant, still headed down the stream.

Denny was satisfied that the raw-boned man and his companion were too far away to notice that the occupant of the skiff was following them.

CHAPTER XII.

In Pursuit of Knowledge.

Denny afterwards confessed that he had not the slightest notion of what he intended to accomplish when he set out to follow the yawl and the two men who had visited the ship-yard. He pulled along after the strangers for a long distance down the river. Though the yawl was a mile in advance, he did not venture many times to look back. Thus it happened, after following the craft for over an hour, that he discovered it had disappeared. The shore all along here was covered with a tall, marshy growth, and was very irregular, bending in and out and forming many bights and miniature bays. Below, where the yawl had disappeared, lay a number of small islands which doubtless once had been tips of promontories, but which had been cut off by the corroding ef-

fect of the current. The yawl had passed out of sight behind this group.

The question was whether the yawl would pull past this group and continue on down the river, or whether it had reached its destination at some point in the channel between the group and the main shore. Denny altered his course, heading for the center of the river. When he reached a position commanding a view of the shore below the group, the yawl was nowhere in sight. As he expected, the craft had drawn up somewhere in the inlet, and here would be found the schooner. Denny headed for the centermost island of the group, and there landed.

The islands numbered seven, the smallest of which was no bigger than a steamer's deck. The one upon whose marshy shore he had grounded the skiff embraced half an acre of ground. All were covered with a growth of reed-grass and willows. It was not easy to pick a way through this tangle; for the grass was shoulder-high and the trees stood nearly as close together as those of a hedge. The trip across was not accomplished without damage to his clothing, but when he

parted the herbage on the farther shore he was rewarded by the sight of a vessel in the inlet.

The vessel was the Sebewa. There was the abbreviated foremast, for one thing, and if this were not enough, there was the yawl and the extra topmast floating at the stern.

The channel in which the schooner had taken refuge was so narrow that Denny could have stood at the water's brink on the island or the main shore and tossed a stick over upon her deck. He would not have believed that there was water enough in there to have floated her. She was anchored, and, as he afterwards said, the chain cable was drawn as tight as a fiddle-string by the current, which tore through the inlet with the velocity of a mill-race. It was neither a safe nor a comfortable berth, and the spy in the herbage was convinced that only a desire for an unthoughtof hiding-place could have led a skipper in there. As the wind was virtually shut off by the forest growth on either hand, he must have had to warp his way in from below by means of his anchors. Certainly, though, the reward was worth the

labor if it were complete concealment the skipper sought; for there was now nothing but the tip of the remaining topmast visible above the trees to attract the notice of any person on a passing vessel or on shore. No vessel would be at all likely to approach the land close enough to obtain a view up or down the channel.

All this Denny observed at a glance when he parted the boughs of a willow that grew close to the water's edge. He stood for some time regarding the schooner, and without fear of discovery, as the deck of the vessel was deserted. The reason for this came to the spy through the evidence of his olfactory organs.

Certain savory odors issuing from the ventilator in the deck over the galley apprised him that the schooner's company was at that moment at supper. Denny now reflected that he had been on the point of going to dinner at the moment the two men from the schooner engaged his attention at the shipyard. He had breakfasted at half past five that morning, and the long pull down the river had aroused in him a voracious appe-

tite. He told himself that he would give much to be able to share in the supper which the schooner's crew was eating. But though he was hungry he had no notion of abandoning the hunt. He wanted at least to have a look at the schooner's people. In a short time the entire company came on deck, the mate and the captain from the cabin and the men from the forecastle.

Denny was puzzled when his eyes first fell on the skipper. He did not look like the man the Tycoon's "crew" had observed on the schooner's deck at the time the latter caught a glimpse of him through the yacht's glass. But Denny reflected that he had had only a momentary glimpse of the man and doubtless had not correctly observed him. The reader knows that the man Denny saw on board the Sebewa in the first instance, was not Captain Eckert. That this was the skipper there could be no question. He was pale and weak-looking, as became a man who had suffered severe injury, and he at once made his supremacy manifest.

Denny had drawn back as soon as the crew made its appearance on deck, and he did not

venture to part the herbage again, contenting himself with what he could see through the branches. But he heard the skipper issue several orders, the effect of which was to set the men at work at repairing the broken topmast. One of the hands climbed to the masthead and began laboring at the futtock shrouds.

The spy was not pleased with this development. From his perch this sailor commanded a view of the river all around. It would now be impossible for the spy to put off in his skiff without being seen before he could accomplish ten boat-lengths from the shore. Denny reflected on the condition of his appetite, and that mid-summer evenings are long; and he hoped it would not take the Sebewa's crew a great while to set the topmast. But it did. Never for more than a few minutes at a time during the remainder of that afternoon and evening was the Sebewa's foretop vacant, and much of the time there were two men aloft. They bungled their job so often that some of it had to be done two or three times over.

Captain Eckert and his mate sat on the

edge of the trunk-cabin and looked on, occasionally issuing an order, the short-tempered skipper more than occasionally hurling epithets at the heads of the laborers.

The spy on the island was not unaccustomed to association with rough men, but Captain Eckert's habitual choice of language disgusted him. He lay on his side in a little hollow of the ground, with his elbows planted, his chin on his hands, and his eyes the most of the time fixed aloft, trying to interest himself in the work going on there. Finally, as the sun sank down into the tree-tops over on the American shore of the river, only a solitary worker, left to slush down the new spar, was still perched aloft. Night came on before this labor was completed.

The time had arrived for the spy to take his departure, if he intended to go. He drew back from his position near the schooner and recrossed the island to his skiff. Here he stood for several moments looking out over the darkening river; then he muttered to himself:

"Every man of them is on deck now, and none of them will be likely to go below for

an hour or so. It's going to be dark as a pocket in the inlet, there, even after the moon rises. I'll have to be cautious about it, but I guess I can afford to take the chance. I'll have something to tell Captain Tiptop when I get back that will be worth the risk, perhaps."

He was resolved to board the schooner.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ventures Much, Gains Little.

The idea of boarding the Sebewa had occurred to Denny while he lay under the willows watching the men at work on the topmast. Having matured his plan in advance it did not take him long to begin its execution. His first procedure was to muffle one of the skiff's oars. This he did by wrapping his handkerchief around the loom where it would rest in the notch in the boat's stern when he used it for a scull. Next he removed his shoes and stockings and rolled his trousers up to his knees. Then he shoved off in the skiff and guided the little craft down stream to the end of the island. Here he again landed, and started to wade in shallow water, close in shore, towing the skiff.

By this time it was inky dark inside the channel where the Sebewa lay. Neverthe-

less, the spy kept close to the island shore for the sake of the additional concealment afforded by the trees, and also because the current momentarily threatened to carry him off his feet.

With one hand holding the boat's painter, and with the other propping the oar against the prow to keep the head of the craft away from the land, he pursued his sidling course up stream till he was within a stone's throw of the schooner's stern. The voices of the men on the deck now reached his ears above the murmur of the river. The glow of Captain Eckert's cigar shone like a red star through the gloom.

Again to embark, and to scull the skiff up under the schooner's stern was the work of a couple of minutes.

The yawl in which the mate and his man had visited the ship-yard had been hauled forward when the new spar was taken aboard. One of the rudder chains, stretching to the quarter as a preventive against the rudder going adrift should it become unshipped, afforded a hold for Denny's skiff. He took a single hitch with the boat's pain-

ter around the chain, conceiving that under the schooner's stern the current could have little or no force—a miscalculation that came near to costing him dearly.

The Sebewa's taffrail was not so high but that by standing on the skiff's forward thwart it was easy for him to draw himself up. In less time than it takes to tell it he had wriggled over the rail and was lying flat on the quarter-deck. He had a fleeting glimpse of two figures seated on the edge of the trunk-cabin, forward, the captain and the mate; but they were now concealed from him. Crawling to the companionway he descended the stairs.

Going down into the Sebewa's cabin was like going down into a cave or a dungeon. No light was burning, and the darkness was so thick that Denny later declared that he could "taste it." At the foot of the stairs he halted to get his bearings.

Over his head the skylight was wide open, and down through the aperture floated the voices of the captain and the mate. At that moment it was the skipper who was speaking. He was engaged in a vigorous denun-

ciation of the steamer which had caused the damage to his vessel and the injury to himself. Denny did not think his talk worth listening to. He began exploring the cabin.

Gradually the pupils of his eyes accommodated themselves to the gloom, and the details of the Sebewa's equipments were revealed to him. The cabin table which, in disuse, was folded and swung up under the deck beams, was now standing in the middle of the floor, and chairs were scattered promiscuously about. The bare feet of the spy gave out no sound, but he had to exercise caution not to collide with the furniture.

"I had a photograph in my own mind of what would happen if I let one of those chairs run into me," he said afterwards.

Every door leading from the cabin was ajar. Casting only a passing glance at the doors astern, and widely awake to the purpose that had brought him on board, he gave his attention to the two doors forward. The one on the starboard side was so far open that he could sidle through without opening it farther. As he did so there came to his nostrils a combination of odors appri-

sing him that he was in the wrong compartment. The air was redolent with the fragrance of boiled beef and potatoes. This was the schooner's pantry.

Denny had not boarded the Sebewa on a foraging expedition, but the savory smells that bombarded his olfactories awoke a clamorous appeal in the yearning void of his stomach. A healthy boy who has not tasted food for fifteen hours is in no condition of body or mind to inhale the odor of boiled beef and pass by on the other side of the way.

Denny's nose was a good one, and spurred to its duties by the demands of his appetite, it led him straight to a locker where by groping he found eatables in plenty. Burdened with a load of sliced beef and several cold potatoes he returned to the cabin. Overhead, the skipper and his mate were still engaged in pointless discourse, and they had not moved from their first position. As a matter of precaution, however, the spy ate his lunch sitting near the top of the cabin stairs. If the men forward made a movement to rise he would dart below or go over the stern.

The skipper and his men were considerate enough not to disturb him. He finished his lunch with an expedition that would have tried the digestive apparatus of any creature but a boy or an ostrich. After devoting brief attention to the men on deck, he descended again into the cabin.

This time he pushed through the door on the port side, forward. It opened into a narrow gangway flanking the after-hold. The door at the farther end, he quickly ascertained by trying, was closed and locked. So far as he was able to discover, there was no other way to enter the hold from the cabin. But to force this door was out of the question. It was secured with a hasp and padlock; and it would require a punch from a battering ram, he told himself, to tear it open.

Grievously disappointed, he set about a retreat. He was not to get off without an adventure.

Just as he reached the cabin he heard a movement of the men on the forward deck. It was accompanied by a tapping sound on the trunk-cabin—the mate was knocking the

ashes out of his pipe. Over the edge of the skylight loomed the figure of the skipper, who had risen to his feet. As the spy made his way across the cabin he heard the latter voice this speech:

"You had better go alone, Brott. Take the yawl and pull down there and take a look at the cellar and see if anything will have to be done to accommodate the stuff, and if we can get in there without any of the neighbors suspecting what is going on. I'd go myself, but I can trust to your judgment, I guess. I'll have to. I think I'd better turn in now and give these sore ribs of mine a rest. Look out for the sloop, if she's at her dock yet."

Then the mate went forward and the skipper came aft along the gangway between the trunk-cabin and the starboard rail. He was startled to hear a splash under the stern. He ran to the taffrail and looked over. There was nothing to be seen but the swirling water.

The moon had risen, and shone through the treetops on the main land, casting here and there a glimmer on the inlet. The captain looked down stream, but saw nothing to

alarm him. It must have been a big fish or a piece of drift-wood caught in the eddy from the vessel's stern, he thought.

The splash was made by the spy. While the voice of the captain sounded in his ears that individual had regained the quarter-deck. He was in so much of a hurry that he did not stop to look when he swung over the taffrail, and consequently he was filled with a mixture of emotions when his feet, instead of touching the skiff, encountered only space. In a flash he comprehended how it had come about. The skiff's painter had not held, and the skiff had gone careening down stream.

There was no time to reflect. It was light enough for the captain to see the spy's hands clutching the top of the rail; and so, when the captain started to walk aft, the spy let go.

He was so excited when he went under that he forgot to close his mouth. When he rose, a hundred feet down-stream, he was strangling. The velocity of the current was something to inspire terror. The thought that he was to be carried out upon the open

river added to his fright. Blindly he struck out, making the mistake of heading for the main shore, which was farthest.

It was a hard battle. He was an indifferent swimmer when stripped, and now he was clothed and hampered. He felt that the fight was going against him. Slowly, but beyond a doubt, he made some progress across the current, but his strength was diminishing. Far below the schooner his toes finally touched bottom. The shore was not two yards away. He endeavored to stand, but the current carried him off his feet.

All this time, from the moment he rose to the surface, he was conscious that there was somebody on the main shore running along by the water's edge, following him down stream.

He had no time to think, but now, as he felt himself being drawn back into the rushing stream, he uttered a gasping cry for help.

Down the bank and into the water came the unknown person, running. A hand was extended, and the imperiled youth was drawn to a place of safety. Then, to his as-

tonishment, the unknown, without waiting for a word of thanks to be spoken, turned and made his way swiftly up the bank, disappearing in the woods.

This was the story Denny told Perry and me in the cabin of the Tycoon. At its conclusion he said:

"You bet, if I ever run across the fellow that pulled me out of the water, I'll do the right thing by him. I thought I was a 'done for.' I tried to say something to express my feelings, but he vanished like a spook. I didn't even get a good look at him. All I could see was that he was a rather slim man, and wore a soft felt hat and a long-tailed coat."

CHAPTER XIV.

Cousin Tony's Sunny Side.

It took Denny more than two hours to tell his story. It was not till he reached the climax that anybody else spoke a word. Then Perry looked at me with a curious expression of countenance, and said:

"A slim man in a soft felt hat and a long-tailed coat. That must have been the man you saw lurking around your house last night, Captain Tiptop. He had plenty of time to reach there if he set out at once after rescuing Denny."

"Undoubtedly it was the same man."

This talk awakened Denny's curiosity, and he had to be given an account of my adventures. When told of my seeing the man with the yawl, land near the Tycoon's wharf he said:

"That was the fellow Captain Eckert

called Brott. He is the mate of the Sebewa, all right. He just about had time to reach your place, Captain Tiptop, after he left the schooner. As for me, I had to walk back. I looked for the skiff and found it up against a log a little way down stream from the place where I landed, and it was so badly stove in, it will never be of any more use. I came home along the river road, and made poor time of it; for I was bare-footed."

Denny would have the skiff to pay for. I knew that he could ill afford the loss, and I mentally determined to make good the damage when he and I should be alone. I went on with my own story, reciting what I had seen and heard in the cellar, and finishing with an account of the futile pursuit of the "man in the long-tailed coat." Denny gave close attention, and at the conclusion declared he couldn't make "head nor tail of the whole business." But Perry asked:

"Have you any idea, Captain Tiptop, who the man in the long-tailed coat is?"

Evidently he harbored the same suspicion that had fastened itself on my mind, and I was confident that we were right; but as it

was a matter of speculation I preferred not to talk about it just then, and I took the liberty to ignore his query.

By this time it was long after mid-day, and in addition to the fact that the July sun was pouring a torrent of heat on the roof of the Tycoon's cabin, rendering the interior as close as an oven, my friends awoke to the fact that it was meal time. They took their departure, after I had inquired of Denny whether his employer understood that the Tycoon's cruise had been interrupted, and not abandoned. Because, I went on to explain, it was my purpose to keep an eye on the Sebewa and Captain Eckert, and I wanted both my friends on board the sloop with me, if possible. It appeared there would be no difficulty on this score.

As soon as the boys were gone I cooked and ate lunch in the sloop's galley; then made sail and headed down the river. In a few minutes I arrived opposite the Tycoon's wharf. As I came about, to work the yacht up stream to her moorings, I saw Tony Lupton strolling down the wood path from the house.

"Where have you been all night, Captain Tiptop?" he inquired as the sloop came alongside the end of the pier.

"How did you know that I had been away all night, Cousin Tony?"

"That's an easy one, Captain Tiptop. Because you went away in the boat about nine o'clock, and didn't come back. Give me something harder."

"I will! How do you know that I didn't come back after you were abed, and leave again before you were up?"

"That's as easy as the other," rejoined my cousin, with a wide grin. "Because there was a friend of yours here early, and old man Brott didn't find you in your room when he went to call you."

"You keep yourself well posted as to my movements."

This comment I delivered in a reasonably pleasant tone; for I had discerned that Tony was in a different frame of mind than when I left him at the wharf the night before. It looked to me as though he had come down to the wharf with a stratagem

in mind, and I was willing to give him all the encouragement he needed.

"If you'll heave your hawsers over here I'll make 'em fast for you," said Tony.

I had fastened upon the cap-sill of the wharf with the boat-hook, always kept in the standing-room, and was making my way forward while I kept the sloop from falling back with the current. I threw over first the bow and then the stern line, and he took a turn with them around the piles. His deftness revealed that he had had some practise. A boy could not live in a town like Algonac, on the St. Clair River and contiguous to the lake, without absorbing some boat lore, though I did not believe Tony's knowledge of nautical matters was either broad or deep.

"What are you going to do now, Captain Tiptop?" queried he, leaping down into the standing-room, where I was engaged in returning the boat-hook to its place under the seat.

"I am going up to the house after some of my personal impedimenta."

" 'Personal impedimenta?' What is that, Captain Tiptop?"

"I beg your pardon, Cousin Tony. That's a common saying of mine and I used it without thinking. I mean that I am going up to the house after some of my things—clothes and books and other personal effects."

"That's the first time I ever heard of clothes and books and things being called imp—what-dy'e-call-'em?" asserted Tony, eyeing me narrowly from between his faded lashes.

I could not help laughing at his expression of ponderous cunning. A scowl mantled his fat features, and I thought we were going to have another set-to, such as that of the night before. But he curbed his resentment, with a manifest effort.

"I was in hopes you would invite me to take a little sail with you," he said, in what probably passed with him as a very amiable voice. "I think I told you last night that I would like to see how it goes on board the Tycoon, Captain Tiptop."

"I am sorry, but I am afraid I have not the time this afternoon. By the way, Cousin Tony, that makes five times that you have addressed me as Captain Tiptop within the

last five minutes. Nobody but my friend, Perry Benson, and my other friend, Dennis Cleary, ever called me by that name. How did you get hold of it?"

"Don't you remember?" he asked, with another of his labored grins, "the other night on Lake St. Clair—I mean while you were on board the schooner Sebewa after the collision with the steamer,—you left two friends in the sloop's boat alongside. I heard one of them sing out to you and call you Captain Tiptop."

I now began to understand Tony's stratagem.

CHAPTER XV.

The Plotters Make a Move.

Tony's purpose was made plain by his reference to the Sebewa and the accident on the lake. Up to this moment nothing had been said by either my uncle or his son about that occurrence. Doubtless they did not know just how to deal with the subject. The interview they had had with the mate of the schooner had given them an idea. Upon Tony had devolved the duty of opening the topic, and I divined that my cousin was to make some offhand explanation that was to lull my suspicions, if I had any.

"I remember very well seeing both you and your father on board the Sebewa," I observed, willing to give him the chance he sought. "As neither of you said anything about it when you arrived here, I didn't

know but it was a forbidden topic, so I did not mention it."

"We never thought of it," Tony declared. "Pa didn't recognize you at first, and he never thought of it till I told him I believed you were the same fellow that took charge of the schooner after the collision."

"How did you and your father happen to be passengers on board the Sebewa, if I may ask?"

I knew this was the question he wanted to answer.

"Well, Captain Eckert is an acquaintance of pa's, and he happened to be at one of the docks at Algonac the day pa and I decided to come down here. He offered to bring us along on board his boat. We thought we might as well save the expenses of the trip. It came near turning out to be a pretty dear trip, after all. Pa says if you hadn't happened along just when you did, we might have all been drowned."

To conceal a smile, I turned a look out over the river.

"I think your father has too high an opinion of my service. The schooner was in no

danger of sinking. I presume she reached port all right?"

"Of course she did, Captain Tiptop, or else how would the old man and I be here this minute?" Tony replied, with a repetition of his grin. "The Sebewa reached Detroit all right, and she is up there now, discharging her cargo."

I thought of the schooner anchored in the inlet a couple of miles down the river, and wanted to smile again. Though Tony did not know it, there was another hitch in his story. Captain Eckert had told me that his passengers were the Sebewa's owners. The skipper and my uncle should have compared notes before Tony was sent to tell his yarn.

As the emissary of the plotters seemed to have no further revelations to make, I went about my business of preparing the sloop's cabin to receive the personal effects to be brought from the house. This necessitated the emptying of one of the lockers in the cabin and a more compact stowage there. Seated on the edge of a berth, my cousin was an interested witness of every movement. I was willing to allow him to fulfil his duties

as a spy, for I was doing all this for effect, anyway.

"You must be going to bring down a lot of stuff," said Tony, noting the extent of my preparations.

"I am; I am going to remove to the yacht everthing moveable at the house that belongs to me."

"You must be going on a long cruise."

"I may not set foot on this wharf again in two months," was my reply, to which I added the mental reservation, "and then, again, I may."

"I'll help you lug your traps down here, if you want me to."

There was no reason why I should not avail myself of his assistance. With it the labor was soon finished. During our several trips to the house I caught occasional glimpses of my uncle and of Harvey Brott and his wife; but none of them approached me, and I was not bothered with questions. I now had every reason to believe that they secretly regarded my departure with satisfaction.

Later that afternoon, when I cast off from

the wharf, Tony voiced a desire to help me sail the sloop up to the ship-yard where, he had been informed, my friends were to come on board. I told him without much ceremony that I stood in need of no assistance, and left him on the wharf. As the sloop moved up the stream I saw him return to the house, to make his report to his father, no doubt.

About eight o'clock that evening Perry and Denny, in compliance with a message sent them, "reported for service," as Denny said. Half-an-hour later, after a council of war in the yacht's cabin, at which our plan of action was carefully mapped out, we hoisted the sloop's light, and under all sail headed down the river, laying the course well over toward the Canadian shore.

There was a stiff breeze coming out of the southeast, and we made good time. We passed the group of islands behind the largest of which, according to Denny's report, lay the Sebewa; and at a safe distance below we crossed to the American side and put out our light. Denny pulled me ashore in the tender, and I walked up stream till the hid-

den schooner came into view in the inlet. In the gloom of a willow by the water's edge I took up my watch, with a certain definite expectation of what was to occur; and within an hour my expectation was realized.

On the road back from the river there was heard the sound of buggy wheels. The vehicle turned into the woods at a point exactly opposite the place where the schooner lay at anchor. When some one was heard coming through the woods toward the river-side I took refuge behind a thick clump of willows, in a position from which I could peer forth and see the schooner and the main shore opposite her anchorage.

Within a moment the person heard approaching appeared at the top of the bank, where he stood looking over at the Sebewa. It was dark in the inlet, though the moon shone through the tree-tops, and in places filtered its light down to the ground. A stray gleam happened to fall on the precise spot where the newcomer issued from the woods, and he was incautious enough to remain standing in the full refulgence of it.

For several moments he seemed to be at a

loss to know what to do. The reason of this doubt was not far to seek. The vessel showed no lights, and seemed to be deserted. Finally he lost patience.

"Hullo, you; are you all dead over there?" he bawled, and the voice was that of Tony Lupton.

"Shut up, you calf, and get back out of the light!" commanded an invisible authority on board the schooner; and this time it was Captain Eckert who spoke.

Tony growled out some retort, but he was heedful enough to draw out of the moon's ray.

Shadowy forms were now seen moving on the schooner's deck, forward. Two men slid down into the yawl, which was floating from the cathead in the position Denny had described. The boat was pulled to the shore, and Tony Lupton embarked.

But I had seen enough to satisfy me that my calculations as to what would be the movements of the plotters were correct. What Tony's message to Captain Eckert would be, was a foregone conclusion.

By the time the yawl with its passenger

had returned to the schooner's side, I had returned to the place where Denny was waiting for me with the sloop's tender. Perry was standing off and on in the yacht, close inshore. Without loss of time, Denny and I clambered aboard, and he made the tender fast.

Perry relinquished the helm, and I headed the sloop down stream, diagonally from the shore. When we were so far out on the river that the island group was reduced to shadow I threw the sloop's head up into the wind, and again we waited.

We did not have to wait a great while. With the night-glass I kept a close watch on the mouth of the inlet. Soon I was rewarded with a glimpse of the vessel, as she went drifting by the opening between the islands. A few moments later she issued from behind the lowest of the group.

She had every breadth of canvas set. Her topsails caught the breeze through the island tree-tops, and she moved out on the river. Having obtained an offing she came up into the wind and headed upstream. Over her

starboard quarter, but so far out as to be barely distinguishable in the night, the sloop moved in watchful pursuit.

CHAPTER XVI.

Captain Tiptop Walks Into a Trap.

The Sebewa, under fore and mainsails, topsails, jib and staysail, made good progress up the river, but the sloop made better; for though she did not carry as great a spread of canvas as the schooner, she was built for speed and she sailed better in the wind's eye. Before the two vessels had progressed far after leaving the islands I saw that we were overhauling the chase.

"If we don't want to pass her, Captain Tiptop, we'll have to shorten sail," Denny observed.

My companions were sitting on the lee side of the standing-room, taking turns with the glass.

"We are almost up with her" Perry announced, a moment later. "I can see the men moving about on her deck. They are touch-

ing up the sheets every little while. They are trying to get all the speed they can out of her."

"I have no doubt they are in a hurry," I said. "They have seized on the opportunity when the Tycoon is away from her wharf to make a landing. Captain Eckert may send a boat up to the ship-yard to look for her."

"Well, as she won't be there, they won't be apt to find her," said Denny. "Then they'll probably begin to take a look at the river. They'll see us nosing along in their wake as sure as they've got eyes to see with."

"I don't think they can distinguish our rig and build at this distance, in the night," said Perry.

Perry's belief seemed reasonable, and it was on the strength of it that I held the sloop to her course.

But, apprehending that it was time to shorten sail, Perry and Denny, without waiting for the word, went forward and took in the jib and topsail.

"If that don't hold her down enough, we'll take a reef in the mainsail; but Captain Eck-

ert's old hooker ought to be able to draw away from us now," said Denny.

The Sebewa did draw away from us. When she came up with the Tycoon's wharf the sloop was more than a mile astern.

In futherance of the prearranged plan, as the Sebewa drew near the wharf we stood further in toward the Canadian shore again. Far above us and across the river could be seen the myriad lights of Detroit, with the sparser illumination of Windsor on the Canadian shore, opposite. Here Perry took the helm again, and I took the night-glass.

The Sebewa was by this time barely distinguishable against the forest growth at the rear of my father's grounds. She was seen to come up into the wind in the shadow of the trees and a moment later swing around with her head to the current. She had anchored. The Tycoon was headed across the river once more.

Behind a bend in the shore, half a mile below the schooner, the sloop was anchored, the canvas taken in, and we all went ashore in the tender. Perry remained to watch the boat and the sloop, while Denny,

at his own wish, accompanied me up the river shore till we reached the high board fence which skirted the side of the grounds. Here I asked my friend to return. At first he did not want to do so.

"I think you had better let me stay with you, if you are bound to go in amongst these fellows," he urged; but I was firm in the conviction that one head was better than two on such a mission as was contemplated.

"I am not afraid of coming to any harm on my father's premises. These fellows are undoubtedly law-breakers—we are pretty well satisfied by this time what they are up to; but they won't dare to lay hands on me, if they discover me. I don't intend they shall discover me."

While I clambered up on the fence by the aid of a dead tree limb propped against the boarding, Denny accordingly started back for the sloop's tender.

"Don't forget to keep a sharp lookout on the river," I called to him from my perch on the fence; "and don't forget to tell Perry to follow the schooner if she leaves before I get back. Don't wait for me in that case."

There was no telling that he heard me, for he gave no sign of the fact, but as I had told him the same thing once before, I believed he would execute the mission. My mind easy on that score, I dropped down on the side of the fence nearest the house and began to pick my way through the grove.

Within five minutes after entering the grounds I sighted the schooner through the trees. She was lying about ten yards above the wharf and as close in shore as she could come without touching bottom. The reason Captain Eckert had not chosen to avail himself of the wharf became apparent as I drew closer.

At the edge of the water, among the trees, stood a wagon with a team of horses attached, and there was a man on the seat. A glance at the schooner explained the mission this outfit was to accomplish. Two boats had been lowered over the vessel's side, and the crew was engaged in transferring the cargo. Two men were lifting it over the rail and two others, one in each boat, received it as fast as it came. The cargo appeared to be composed of boxes or

small bales, but from where I stood the exact fact could not be determined—and it was this fact that I had set about determining.

The men on the schooner appeared to be in a hurry. They were working in silence, apparently, and they handled the cargo with a deftness that suggested frequent practise in the art of breaking bulk swiftly, noiselessly, and at night without lights. Their haste was no matter to be wondered at. The schooner's position was not favorable to unlawful operations. She was exposed to the view of vessels passing up or down the river on the American side, and the sight of a craft breaking cargo at that hour and in that position might excite inquiry.

The first two boat loads were pulled ashore by the men who received the cargo when it was handed over the side. The man with the horses backed the wagon down into the water, so that the stuff could be handed up to him out of the boats. When he spoke to the horses I recognized him as Harvey Brott.

I did not wait for the wagon to be loaded. The course the rig would take was no mat-

ter for speculation. It would drive down the river a couple of lengths, keeping in the shallow water near shore to conceal the wagon tracks. A short cut across the open grounds would then enable it to reach the graveled driveway, over which the house could be approached without leaving any permanent marks. The use of a garden rake would obliterate the ruts made by the wheels.

Being as near to the wagon as I could well get without discovery, I hit on a plan. Making a detour, I crossed the lawn to the front of the house.

Not unmindful of my previous experience with the sentinel, I was careful to make a thorough reconnaissance before approaching very close. There seemed to be nobody on guard at the front. Indeed, I could not think who would be; mayhap Mrs. Brott, which was not at all probable, or Silas Lupton, which was not much more probable. My uncle, beyond doubt, was busy at the rear of the house. Tony, I remembered, had driven down the river to carry his message to Captain Eckert and, as the river road was a long

and winding one, probably he had not yet returned.

In my pocket was a key to the front hall door. Though it was contrary to my practise to carry one, the idea had occurred to me when my uncle took possession of the place that it might be well to have the means at hand to enter or leave the house at will. With this key I now unlocked the hall door and entered.

I was careful to close the door behind me, softly, but I did not lock it. As it was my desire not to have it known that I was in the house, this was a blunder. No skilled detective, of whose achievements I have read, would have been guilty of such a false step. But I am not possessed of the instincts of a detective, and on the whole am just as well satisfied, though a little adroitness would have saved me a discomforting experience on this occasion.

Having made an entrance into the house I tiptoed my way into the kitchen. The windows here commanded a view of the back yard and the cellar entrance. Below stairs, in the cellar, could now be heard

someone moving about—my uncle, of course. Mrs. Brott, it appeared, either had gone to bed so as to be out of the way or had left the place.

Behind the drawn curtains of one of the kitchen windows I took my stand. The wagon had arrived, and Harvey Brott and the schooner's two men were carrying their first load of goods down the cellar steps. They had taken the precaution to rein up the team without driving onto the soft ground.

From the window, by drawing apart the curtains a little, I could plainly see what was the nature of the cargo. It was made up of boxes about two feet square and a foot or more in depth. I hoped the workers would say something loud enough to reach my ears which would give a clue as to the contents of the boxes. They did not do this, but a misstep of one of the seamen as he was going down the stairs did the business quite effectively. He dropped one of the cases, and it fell upon the hard earth floor with a crashing sound, unmistakably that of breaking glass.

I had seen and heard enough. My only thought now was to get out of the house and the grounds without discovery. Cautiously I tiptoed across the kitchen floor and stepped out into the hall. At that instant I thought I heard the sound of someone breathing. I halted and strained my eyes to pierce the darkness. Then before I could turn or brace myself for the shock somebody ran into me full tilt, sending me flying half-way up the corridor, where I fell to the floor in a heap.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Futile Search.

Again I ask the reader to suffer an interruption of this story. Perhaps it is egotism that leads me to fear such an occurrence may provoke displeasure. Of course, in my own estimation, my personal adventures are rather more important than those of Perry and Denny; but while I had my rencounter with the person who precipitated himself upon me at the moment I issued from the kitchen, Perry and Denny were having an experience which must be related before my own adventure is followed to the outcome.

For cogent reasons I consider it preferable to let Perry tell the story. Perry is with me as I write this history of our adventures, and he consents to take the pen for a few moments. The reader will there-

fore remember that it is Perry who now addresses him:

* * * * *

Captain Tiptop asks me to tell what happened after he left Dennis Cleary and me in charge of the sloop while he went up to the house to look after the doings of the Sebewa's people.

While well aware that I have not the skill in the "turning of phrases" that my friend, the captain, seems to have developed, it is only a plain narrative I am called upon to recount, and I will endeavor to tell it in a plain fashion. The reader will have to overlook the frequent "I" sticking out all over my paragraphs. The pronoun, however much it may offend by frequent repetition, is not to be dispensed with.

Captain Tiptop has told how he took his departure in company with Denny, leaving me with the yacht's dingey. They had been gone about half-an-hour when Denny returned. The captain says that going through the woods he asked Denny to see to

it that a close watch was kept on the Sebewa while he was gone. He must have had a premonition at the last minute that he was to get into trouble up at the house; and it was a part of our plan to obtain full and complete information concerning the schooner. By this time Captain Tiptop and I had it pretty well settled in our own minds what the Sebewa was and what manner of men her people were, as also what was the character of Hugh's uncle. Denny, it will have to be said, did not seem to appreciate the evident facts in the case, and while he was eager to help in the accumulation of evidence against the wrong-doers, he did not seem to be able to follow the drift of affairs.

For this reason, no doubt, he failed to appreciate the request made of him while he and the captain were going through the woods. Even when the latter called out to him, as they parted company, repeating his warning, he was more intent on convincing himself that the captain had made a mistake in going ahead alone than he was on heeding the captain's orders; and this Denny has confessed to me.

Therefore, when Denny came back to the place where we had grounded the dingey, he had nothing more to say than to voice and repeat his opinion that he should have been allowed to accompany the sloop's commander. To all this I paid little attention, for I was of the opinion that Captain Tiptop knew his own business, and I conceived that the matter of the Sebewa's doings was nobody's affair if it was not our captain's.

I had been told to wait for him, and to see that the sloop did not drag her anchor in the swift current and go ashore on the head of land below her anchorage. The iron held fast, and there was nothing to do but take things easy, which I did by picking out a soft spot in a hollow between the roots of a big tree up on the bank, and there lolling at ease. Denny amused himself by throwing stones at the sloop's pennant, which I considered a very childish performance.

It was a warm night, and there was little air stirring under the trees. I suppose, if I am to tell the strict truth in this narration, I shall have to confess that I fell asleep, or

at least dozed under the big elm by the water side. At all events, when I was startled by a drop of water falling on my nose, and sat up, it was to discover that the moon had gone down and that it was raining.

My hat had fallen off, and I had to look hard to find it, so dark had it become. There can be no doubt that I had fallen asleep, but how long I slept I cannot tell you even at this writing. My first thought, after finding my hat, was for the sloop, which I had been set to watch.

Running down to the water's edge I was greatly relieved to see that the Tycoon had not moved. The sloop's tender was also exactly where it had first been run ashore. My immediate fears allayed, a feeling of annoyance took possession of me for having been so negligent as to fall asleep on duty. I thought Denny might have awakened me. This reflection led me to wonder what had become of Denny. He was nowhere in sight.

"Perhaps he also has gone to sleep under a tree," was my thought; and I began to search and call out.

I went around every tree in the vicinity,

but I failed to find my shipmate. After all, he was not likely to remain quiet all the time that had elapsed. He had grown tired of throwing stones at the sloop's pennant and had found some other equally engrossing occupation at a distance. The fact that the rain did not cause him to return made it look as though he, at least, considered his occupation of some importance.

I remembered that the doors of the sloop's cabin had been left ajar, and that the transom windows in the trunk-cabin were also open. The rain would be sure to beat in and wet the carpet and the bedding in the berths. My first procedure, without worrying about Denny, was to push off in the tender and board the yacht. Having made all shipshape there, I pulled back to the shore. By this time I had bethought myself to ascertain what time it was, and found that it was after one o'clock. If it had not been for that drop of rain I might have slept all night.

The lateness of the hour convinced me that something serious had occurred. Captain Tiptop had been gone two hours, where-

as he had not expected to be absent more than an hour at the longest. And then there was Denny's prolonged absence to account for.

As the tender struck the river bank and grounded, I was relieved to discover someone coming at a run along the water's edge from up stream; and this person, I soon saw, was Denny. My shipmate was puffing like a locomotive on an up grade, and evidently he was very much excited or had been running far. When he came up he was so winded that at first he could not speak. He dropped on the gunwale of the dingey and panted for a minute, while I stood in the rain waiting for him to begin his story. There was no use firing questions at him when he could not command the breath to talk.

As was usual with him, and like some authors I know of, when he did commence he began in the middle of his story and worked both ways.

"She's gone!"

"Who is gone; and where?"

"I don't know where; she was gone when I got there!"

A light dawned in my brain. I caught my shipmate by the shoulder.

"You mean the Sebewa? You have been up there; and the schooner has left?"

He nodded.

"Tumble aboard here, lively!" and I laid hold of the dingey's bow.

He scrambled back and took his seat in the stern sheets. I pushed off and hurriedly gathered up the oars. In two minutes we were on board and had the canvas up.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Seven Men In a Boat.

The Sebewa had finished discharging her cargo and sailed away. This much I gathered from Denny's panting utterances; and, as has been related, I lost no time in getting the sloop under way.

Captain Tiptop had not returned. Under any other circumstances I would not have taken the liberty of disregarding his orders, which, as they had been delivered to me, were to remain with the sloop in hiding behind the point of land till he came back. But I knew that it was imperative to keep track of the schooner, and I feared that already too much time had been lost.

"What are we going to do now?" Denny wanted to know, when he had the anchor up and came aft to trim the sheets.

"I am going to follow the schooner, if I

can come within sight of her."

"Well, you can't. She was out of sight when I got there."

"How did you happen to go up to the house, when you were told to stay with me and keep watch of the sloop?" I asked severely.

"After you went to sleep under a tree I happened to remember that Captain Tiptop told me to keep an eye on the Sebewa where she lay at anchor. He asked me to tell you to do the same, but I forgot to pass the word."

I set my teeth. There was no use in upbraiding Denny; he would only wonder why I was so severe with him. Besides, I had fallen asleep when I should have been attentive to my duty.

"Tell me what you did and what you saw," was what I did say.

"While you were asleep I happened to think of what Captain Tiptop said. I didn't think it was worth while to wake you up, for I could watch the schooner well enough alone."

"There you were mistaken. Captain Tip-

top didn't mean that we should keep watch from the shore, but from the river. If you had told me, one of us would have pulled out every few minutes and seen to it that the Sebewa didn't get away while we were napping. The captain meant that we should follow the schooner if she weighed anchor before he returned."

"I don't see how I could be expected to figure all that out," declared my companion in an injured tone; "and I don't see how you figure it out, either."

"Never mind that now, but go on with your story."

"Well, as I said before, when you went to sleep —"

"Cut that, if you please! You have said it three or four times. I know I went to sleep."

"Well, that's where my story begins, anyhow," persisted Denny.

I always suspected that Denny was not so simple a youth as he sometimes appeared to me. He was "getting back" at me in his own way for reprimanding him. There was nothing to do but to let him shape the course

of his narrative to suit himself.

"When you went to sleep," he began once more, "I thought I'd do what I supposed Captain Tiptop told me to do. I left you asleep, though I saw it was going to rain, and you might get wet. I knew you'd wake up before it began to rain very hard. I ran up the shore and climbed up on the fence near where Captain Tiptop went over. I looked for the schooner, but I didn't see her."

"I suppose not," I said, disgusted. "Is that all?"

"I think that's enough."

I thought so, too—in a certain sense.

"Of course when I saw the schooner was gone, I got down off the fence as quickly—"

"I should have thought you would have remained there till she came back," I said ironically.

"You needn't guy me, Perry. I hustled back as fast as I could to tell you. You had waked up by that time—"

"Never mind; I know enough about it now."

I did not care to hear anything more

about that nap, and, besides, the sloop was approaching the head of land. When we came out from behind the point I had the proof that what Denny had reported was true. The place where we had last seen the schooner knew her no longer. Without troubling myself to consult with my companion I let the sloop fall off and we moved down the river.

All this time it had continued to rain. Big drops were driven in our faces by the wind, which had moved around into the south and was coming quite strongly.

Captain Tiptop's night glass lay on the seat near the tiller. As soon as we had the wharf well astern I searched the river as far as I could see ahead and on both beams for a glimpse of the schooner. I could not see far, for in addition to the fact that the moon had set, there was the driving rain to make the darkness thicker.

Denny, when he saw me hold the sloop to her course, went into the cabin and got his oilskin coat and storm hat. Then he took a seat on the weather side of the boat, and was gloomily silent. He was disgruntled be-

cause of my sharp treatment of him, and now I was sorry for it. The fact was painfully apparent to me that something serious had happened—more serious than the disappearance of the Sebewa; and I wanted my shipmate's counsel and sympathy.

"You see what I'm trying to do, don't you, Denny?" I asked in a very mild tone.

"You are trying to find the schooner, I suppose. I don't believe you will find her any quicker than you could sop up Detroit River with a lady's handkerchief. You couldn't see her if she was to climb over into the standing-room, here, with us."

"I only wish I knew whether she went up the river."

"She didn't go down, or I'd have seen her. It was plenty light enough to see her at that time. I don't know what she should want to go back to her anchorage behind the islands for, either."

No more did I. Having discharged his cargo, there would be no need for Captain Eckert to return to his hiding-place. I had another matter to worry about besides the movements of the schooner. This was the

disappearance, or rather the non-appearance, of Captain Tiptop.

A remark from my companion helped me to make up my mind to abandon the fruitless chase down the river.

"I think we might better be looking for Captain Tiptop than chasing around here in the wet," said he. "Of course the sloop is fast, and she would soon overtake the schooner if we knew where the schooner was. But from the way it looks from this side of the boat, you might keep clear on down to Buffalo without seeing her."

"We will go back and look for Captain Tiptop."

So far as I could discern there was nothing else to be done. As for being able to find the captain, however, I gave up that hope before allowing it to linger two minutes in my mind. To me, the fact was assured that Captain Tiptop was not at the house.

On the return trip we had a strong beam wind, and we made good time against the current. I took the precaution to have Denny set the masthead light and then go forward in order to keep a lookout. There

was danger that we might be run down, and this precaution should have been taken before.

We had the wharf at the house in view through the darkness, and I was debating with myself whether to make the landing there, when Denny all at once sang out for me to luff.

"Hard down!" he cried; and his tone apprised me that no time was to be lost.

I jammed the tiller over, and the sloop's head swung around, spilling the canvas. None too soon, for at that instant a boat filled with men went drifting by.

"You fellows must be insured, all right; you act as though you wanted to be run down!" Denny angrily shouted after them. "It's a wonder you wouldn't sing out."

There was no reply, and the boat disappeared in the murk astern.

"Those fellows must be tongue tied," growled Denny; and he came aft. "Did you get a good look at them?"

I had obtained only a fleeting view.

"There were six of them at the oars and one in the stern-sheets; and I believe they

were all in uniform," added my companion.

"Some yacht's crew, probably," I said, bringing the sloop into the wind again.

"Not if that's their vessel," declared Denny; and he pointed out over the river.

Following the direction indicated I dimly discerned a steamer a little ways off shore.

"She's a side-wheeler," continued my shipmate. "Do you hear her paddles?"

I could hear them, but by this time the sloop had passed the wharf, and if we were to land it was time to do so. Without troubling myself about the steamer or the boat with six oarsmen, which seemed to have passed on its way, I paid out the sheets and we ran in toward the wharf. We anchored and took in the canvas and then went ashore in the dingey.

There were no lights visible in the house. After circling the building we came to the conclusion that there was nothing more we could do that night. Puzzled and even alarmed we started to return to the sloop. We had crossed the lawn and were just entering the grove, through which we would have to pass in order to reach the water

side, when we were startled by a loud command to halt. Stopping and looking around we discovered a number of men approachnig at a run from the direction of the wharf.

"Halt where you are!" repeated the foremost individual of this party.

Denny promptly took to his heels, but I stood my ground.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Familiar Figure.

There was an unmistakable tone of menace in the voice of the leader of the men who came running across the lawn to intercept Denny and me.

As has been told, Denny did not wait to learn who the strangers were, nor what they wanted, but fled without standing on the order of his progress. Two bounds carried him so far into the grove that he was out of sight in the darkness.

My reason for not running was the conviction which flashed upon me that these were not the members of the Sebewa's company, as Denny plainly supposed. At the first glance I noticed that in number they corresponded to the party in the boat which had floated past the sloop while we were nearing the Tycoon's wharf. Further, the

manner of their approach was peculiar. As they came running, the six men following the leader fell into double file. It was suggestive of military or naval training.

Observing me to halt while my companion ran away, the leader of the party called out some order over his shoulder. The two men running foremost in the column thereupon deflected to the right with the obvious purpose of putting themselves between the fugitive and the water's side. I saw plainly enough that Denny was fore-doomed to capture.

Just as this thought settled itself in my mind the leader of the squad reached me and placed one hand on my shoulder.

"Consider yourself under arrest," said he.

He was breathing hard, though whether from excitement, or in consequence of his exertions, was doubtful. I can truthfully say that, if he was excited, I was not.

"By whose authority do you arrest me?"

"By the authority of the United States Government."

The reply was not unexpected. By their

uniforms I had identified the speaker and his followers as officers and men of the revenue marine—men from the revenue cutter Fessenden, in short. I was not wholly surprised to meet them there. Perhaps the reader is not.

"You are rather late, sir," I said; "and you have captured the wrong person."

"I am not so sure of that," was his reply, emphasized with a knowing little laugh that was rather exasperating to me. "I think you know something of what is going on around this place."

"Not so much as I wish I did, sir."

While he spoke he was leading me back across the lawn in the direction of the wharf. All this time he kept his grasp on my collar, which I considered a manifestation of extreme zeal. This was the first time I had felt the hand of the law, and though I was innocent of any wrong-doing the weight of it did not feel comfortable. I took a step aside and his arm dropped.

"You hadn't better try to get away as your friend did," he continued; but he did not offer to lay hands on me again.

"My friend did not know who you were, lieutenant, or he would not have run."

At the wharf was the boat from which the cutter's men had landed. Here the officer came to a halt.

"Mullaney, and you, Geist, go back and see if they have caught that other chap," he commanded, addressing two of his men.

The marines indicated started off. They had not far to go, for half-way across the lawn they met the other two marines returning with the prisoner.

But though these two victors were stout-looking fellows they were having all they could do to bring the captive along. We could hear them remonstrating with him before they came into view. Denny was not uttering any audible complaint, but he was using his heels with effect. He dug them into the ground and sat back, for all the world in the fashion of a rebellious child who refuses to come when called and has to be dragged along. The cutter's men had him each by an arm, and they were hauling him forward by jerks and jumps. When the fellow who had been addressed as Mullaney

got behind and pushed, the whole party came down on the wharf at a run. Even on the wharf Denny did not cease his useless struggles. He wriggled about in the grasp of his captors and dealt them two or three vigorous kicks in the shins that made the men look at their officer imploringly.

"If you don't quit that," declared the latter, "I'll put the irons on you."

"It's all right, Denny," I added. "These are revenue men. They will let us go in a little while, and they may be able to help us out of our trouble."

My appeal had some effect, though Denny did not submit with good grace.

I saw the marines look from one to another as I spoke and then at their officer. They seemed to understand that a mistake had been made; but the lieutenant was not at all impressed, seemingly. He was a young fellow, in appearance not much older than myself, though he must have been in reality my senior by four or five years.

He ordered us down into the boat, and in a moment we were moving out on the river. In another moment the revenue cutter

loomed through the darkness and rain. There was an accommodation ladder hanging at the port quarter of the steamer, and at the head of it, visible over the taffrail, appeared two persons. Behind them the light from the cabin lamps was strong, and we had a momentary view of both, or as much of them as was to be seen over the rail.

One of these men, it was plain from the showing of gold lace on his uniform and the salute which our lieutenant gave him, was the commander of the cutter. The other man was in civilian dress. He was tall—head and shoulders taller than the Fessenden's commander—and slim. It seemed to me that I had seen him before; but as the boat drew alongside, he stepped back out of view.

"Whom have you there, Mr. Castree?" asked the gentleman in gold lace of the officer in the boat.

"Two young fellows I caught prowling about the house up there, sir. Their actions were suspicious, and one of them tried to elude us by running when I halted them. It looks to me as though, if not implicated in this business, they might be able to furnish

some information. I thought it best to bring them off for your inspection."

"You did right. We will let them speak for themselves."

"Speak up, one of you, and tell who you are!" the lieutenant commanded in a low tone of Denny and me, where we sat in the boat's stern-sheets.

"I presume, sir, you are looking for the Sebewa's men," I said, addressing the Fessenden's commander. "Mr. Castree made a mistake when he arrested us. We are friends of Captain Tip— I mean of Hugh Rodman, who lives in that house."

At this juncture somebody behind the captain said something in a voice too low for us in the boat to hear what was spoken.

"Just a moment," said the captain; and he stepped back out of sight.

Then followed a brief dialogue in subdued tones. I was confident that the captain's interlocutor was the man in civilian dress. In a moment the captain reappeared at the rail.

"I am satisfied that this young man tells

the truth, Mr. Castree," he said. "You may return them to the shore."

"But, sir—," I started to say.

"Don't interfere," interposed the lieutenant sharply to me. "You heard what he said. He has no time to talk to you to-night. We've got business before us."

The Fessenden's commander had already turned away from the rail. I would have persisted in spite of the younger officer, had not the latter ordered his men to "give way." A few strokes of the oars, and they had run the boat up to the Tycoon's wharf again. There was nothing for Denny and me to do but disembark.

"It's a nice boat you've got, and I enjoyed the trip in her immensely," Denny declared with fine sarcasm, the minute his foot touched the wharf.

Mr. Castree made no retort, nor did he apologize for having "arrested" us. He seemed put out, but I did not believe he could be any more dissatisfied than I was. I wanted to tell the commander of the revenue cutter about the disappearance of Captain Tiptop.

While Denny and I were returning to the place where we had left the sloop's dingey, we heard the cutter steaming down the river.

"Say; it was the same fellow," began Denny in his characteristic fashion, after we had gotten the sloop's anchor up and were hoisting sail in order to return to the ship-yard.

"What are you talking about?"

"Did you notice that man with the captain on the cutter's quarterdeck?"

"Certainly I did; and I was just thinking that I had seen him before."

"Well, I got a blink at him out of the tail of my eye, and I know I've seen him before."

"Where?"

"He was the man with the long-tailed coat and the soft felt hat that pulled me out of the river."

CHAPTER XX.

Thyra's Pointed Inquiry.

It did not appear that we—Denny and I—could accomplish anything toward finding Captain Tiptop that night. It was now well along toward morning, and having no clue our search could be but a blind one. In spite of the stirring events of the night, moreover, I was beginning to feel the need of rest. The rain had not ceased to fall, and as I had not taken Denny's precaution to put on a storm coat and hat, I was soaking wet from top to toe. Even Denny's declaration that the man in civilian attire we had seen on the deck of the cutter was the man of "the soft felt hat and the long-tailed coat" failed to excite interest in me.

We sailed the sloop up to the ship-yard and moored at the old familiar stake. My companion, after being assured that there

was nothing more to be done that night, turned in and was soundly sleeping some time before I was ready to follow suit. I first started the gasoline stove going, and having turned the flame low, hung my water-soaked clothes where they would dry over night. I was the first to awaken, and the hands of the clock up against the trunk-cabin were pointing to the hour of eight. My shipmate knew what was expected of him, and I dressed and left him sleeping.

There was no need for me to waste time in wondering what had become of Captain Tiptop, and in striving to unravel the mysteries of the night's happenings. Affairs had reached a pass where council other than that of Denny was needed. I was satisfied that the captain would approve of the step I was now about to take. My purpose was to see my father and tell him all that I knew with regard to the captain's troubles.

My father was on the point of leaving for his office in the city, at the moment I appeared, but half-a-dozen words decided him to wait and listen. He returned with me to

the dining-room, and to save time I ate my breakfast while I talked. At first he was the only auditor; but my mother and Thyra, my sister, soon got scent of what was going on and joined us. I gave them a complete account of the events that had occurred, so far as I knew them, and of the movements of the schooner Sebewa.

My father, at first apparently doubtful of the importance of my revelations, gradually became impressed. When I told of Denny's and my "arrest" by the revenue cutter's officers he plainly began to understand the drift of the matter. He made me go over a second time the scene between us and the commanding officer of the cutter. Beyond speeches of this nature to prompt me in my story, he had nothing to say till I concluded. My mother could not understand the situation at all, and after I was done pressed me for further details. Thyra, I noticed, was as deeply impressed as father. She went to the library and returned with a map showing the Detroit River with both the Michigan and Ontario shores. This she

continued to study while the rest of us went on with our talk.

The fact that impressed all present, over and above everything else, was that Captain Tiptop had disappeared. It did not take long to convince my father that there was no likelihood that the captain had returned to the sloop's anchorage after Denny and I sailed away in search of the schooner.

"I do not believe any harm has come to him," my father said. "While it is perfectly plain that illegal business of some kind is going on, the law-breakers will not be at all likely to do Hugh any bodily injury. It looks as though he had been discovered spying on them at their work and captured, though what the rascals expect to accomplish by holding him prisoner is too deep a problem for me."

I was not ready to agree with my parent that no harm was likely to come to my friend.

"You must not forget that the apparent ring-leader is Hugh's uncle—or at least Mr. Rodman's half-brother," my father pointed out, to further reassure me.

"He is a villain, nevertheless."

"Granted! But not a desperate man, at all, if appearances go for much. I have seen him, not only recently, but I met him frequently a good many years ago."

"Then there is no doubt that he is the real uncle, and no impostor?" was my question; for a vague suspicion had possessed my mind.

"Not in the least, Perry. As I said, I knew him before his coming here, and before he became a hotelkeeper at Algonac."

At this point Thyra looked up from her study of the map.

"Do you know, father, what Mr. Lupton's business was in Detroit before he became a hotelkeeper at Algonac?" she asked.

"He was a wholesale liquor-dealer," and I observed my father to smile a little, as though her question were an apt one.

As for myself, I could not see the drift of it, though I did some time later.

"And do you recognize this Captain Eckert from Perry's description, father?" was Thyra's next question.

To this he returned a negative.

For some time there was silence. My father glanced at the clock, and was evidently thinking of the business awaiting him at the office. But he did not like to go, leaving me without some comfort, and I will not be at all backward about confessing that I needed comfort.

"What would you advise me to do?" I asked at last.

"Nothing precipitate," said he. "Wait and watch. Hugh will reappear when you least expect it."

I was disappointed; and so, I could see, was Thyra. She started to speak, but returned to her contemplation of the map, and occasionally she made a note of something on a slip of paper.

"One thing I can assure you of, Perry," my father said as he finally rose to go, "there are more competent heads at work on this case than yours or mine. You would better not interfere. If Hugh does not return in a day or so we will look into the matter further."

With that, it appeared, I would have to be satisfied. My father had one more ques-

tion to ask before he took his leave.

"No word has been received from Hugh's father, I suppose?" he said, while he stood in the doorway. "His lawyer has not heard from him?"

"If he has I have not been informed of the fact."

"And Hugh himself has not said that he has any idea where Mr. Rodman is?"

"I sometimes think he must have, for he has said nothing about the matter of late."

"Then I repeat my assertion that there are wiser heads at work in this matter than yours or mine, Perry. It will come out all right in the end, and before many days have passed, too."

I returned to the sloop, no better equipped for coping with the situation than when I had left it. I did not know just what my father meant by "doing nothing precipitate." He certainly did not mean that I should give up looking for my friend, if any reasonable likelihood of finding him offered itself.

As it happened, I had to act on my father's advice and do nothing but wait, and

that in spite of myself. Although Denny, acting on his own responsibility, spent the greater part of the day watching the windows of the Rodman house, he saw no sign of Captain Tiptop. If the captain were a prisoner there, he was kept too close to permit of his communicating with the outside world. Denny reported that he saw Silas Lupton and Tony, and also Harvey Brott and his wife about the place, but nobody else. It was to be somebody all along unthought of, who was to effect the rescue of Captain Tiptop.

Here my part of the story of Captain Tiptop's troubles properly ends. With an apology for having taken so much time and space to chronicle a series of failures, I hand the pen back to the captain himself.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Struggle in the Dark.

The last the reader saw of me was at the moment I went flying up the dark passage-way in my father's house and fell in a heap on the floor, the motive power that impelled me being the unknown person who came upon me as I issued from the kitchen, after spying on the Sebewa's men at work at the rear of the dwelling.

The unknown assailant butted me squarely in the small of the back. I found time to reflect, even in that moment of surprise, that he must have had a pretty hard head. The blow smote me with the force of a pile-driver. It knocked the "wind" out of me; and after striking the floor I lay quite still. The assailant followed up his attack by piling on top of me. When I felt his hands groping for my throat I gathered myself to-

gether and rolled over, carrying him with me. We were now in the position of two wrestlers, lying prone side by side and locked in a fast embrace.

Up to this juncture the unknown had not uttered a sound above the stertorian breathing which first apprised me of his presence. His breathing now became louder than ever; for, taking my cue from his tactics, I buried my fingers in his throat. He attempted to cry out. I jammed his head backwards, and it struck with a thump against the foot of the stairs which conducted to the upper regions of the house. So far, in spite of my first reverse, I seemed to be getting the best of the battle. Taking heart, I bumped my assailant's head against the stair a second time, and with more vigor than before.

"Let up, Captain Tiptop. Do you want to knock my brains out?" gurgled the victim.

As I had suspected, it was my cousin Tony.

"I will knock your brains out if you don't lie still!" I declared pantingly; and I was mad enough to make my threat sound very savage.

"Let me up and I won't pitch into you again," he implored.

"I don't think you will."

I released the grip on his throat, and we arose to our feet. He started to say something more, but I cut him short.

"Sit down there on the bottom step of the stairs and keep quiet."

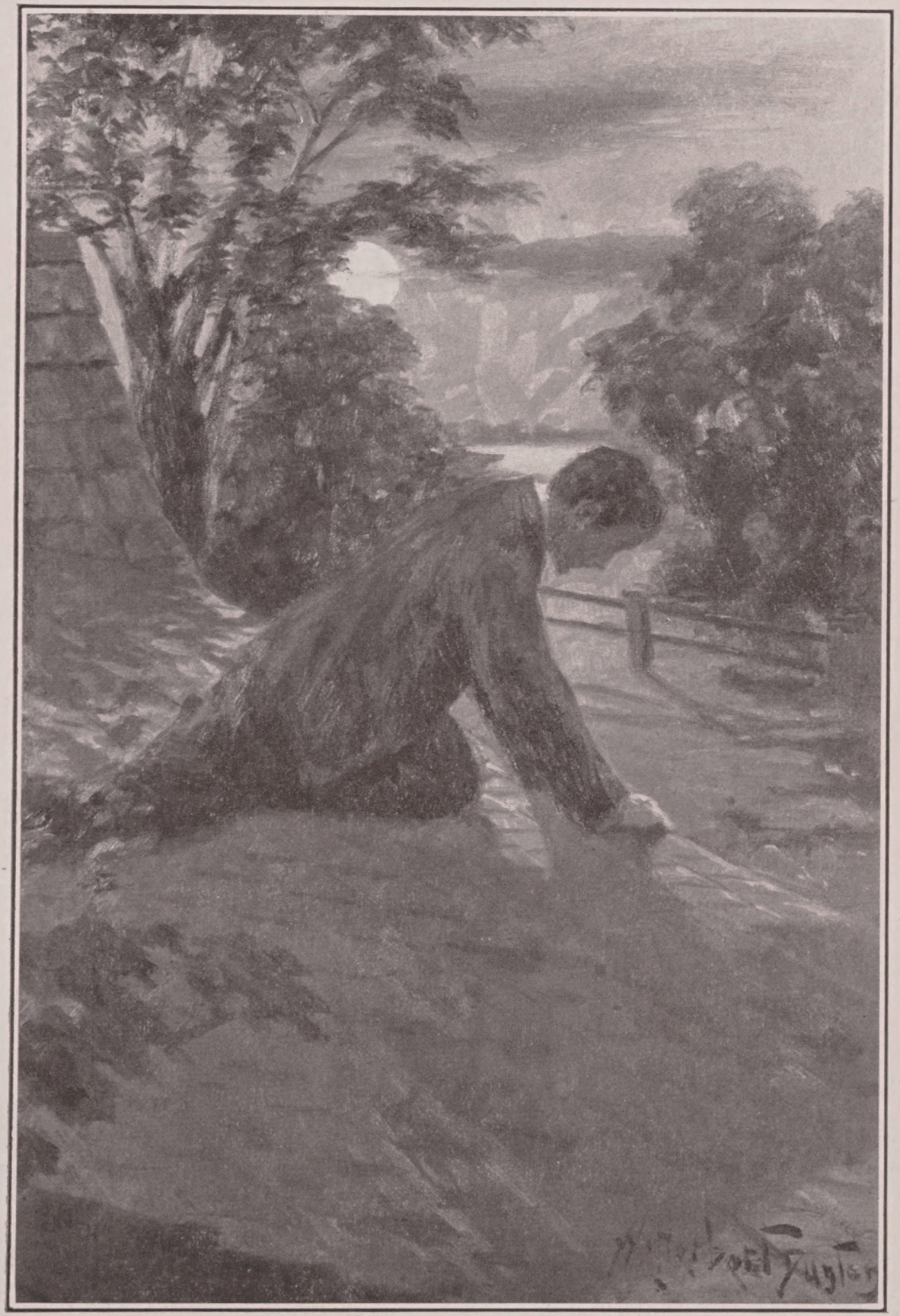
I wanted a chance to regain my breath, and Tony was not loath to avail himself of the same privilege. For an interval nothing was to be heard in the dark hallway but the sound made by our respiratory organs. In spite of my command, Tony was the first to speak.

"Of course I didn't know it was you, Cousin Hugh," he declared in a whining tone. "I took you for a burglar."

"Don't talk so loud."

Notwithstanding my anger and excitement I had all along been careful to make as little noise as possible. I did not forget that my uncle and the Sebewa's men, with Harvey Brott, were at work in the cellar under us.

"If I hadn't thought you were a burglar



THEN I CREPT TO THE EDGE OF THE ROOF AND LOOKED OVER.
(Page 195.)

of course I wouldn't have jumped on you," repeated Tony, but in a lower tone. "I thought you were off on a cruise with those chummies of yours."

"You may be telling the truth, but I think you recognized me when I came out of the kitchen."

I began to talk to gain time. I wanted to think. An explanation for this rencounter soon suggested itself. Tony had just returned from his trip down the river. As I now listened I could hear his horse pawing the gravel of the driveway. I had left the front door unlocked and the key in the keyhole when I entered the building, and as Tony knew it had been secured in the evening he had at once perceived that something was wrong. By listening in the passageway he could hear me moving about in the kitchen. It might be true that he thought I was a burglar, but I believed he did not begin the attack till he saw who it was.

Tony could not have been unmindful of the men at work in the cellar, and I believed he would have allowed a thief to escape rather than raise a disturbance under the cir-

cumstances. But in my case it was different. I had seen the men and the team, and Tony knew that his father and Captain Eckert would themselves have resorted to almost any measure, rather than allow me to leave the house with their secret. The fact that he had begun the attack himself instead of shouting for help was contrary to what I would have expected of him. The opinion I had come to form of my cousin was that he was a great booby, and cowardly, as boobies are. Already he seemed to be sorry for the action, which I could not but feel reflected a certain sort of credit to him.

"I don't think you ought to have cracked my head like that, Captain Tiptop," he said, rubbing the spot on his occiput which had come into contact with the stairs. "You might know—"

"Never mind! If your head aches, Tony, so does my back. Your head must be hard enough to stand a little pounding."

"When I tell pa he'll attend to your case," declared the aggrieved one.

He stood up and moved toward the front door.

"What are you about? Come back here!" was my remonstrance, delivered in an energetic tone.

"I am going to see to my horse. I'm going to take him back to the livery barn," he said; and all the time he kept edging toward the door.

"Stand where you are!"

I made a step in his direction. The result was as should have been expected. He leaped to the door, and even as I grappled with him, turned the key in the lock. At the same time he raised a shout. I heard a commotion in the cellar, and the door at the foot of the cellar stairs was thrown open.

Before I would be able to drag Tony away from the front hall door and unlock it, the enemy would be upon me in force. Retreat at the back of the house would be cut off by the enemy there. There was no time to reach and raise a window on the ground floor. It would be necessary to gain a lead on the pursuers.

All this flashed through my mind while Tony's first outcry went reverberating

through the quiet house. Turning, I darted up the front stairs.

As I bounded up, four steps at a time, I could hear the enemy from the cellar coming up the lower flight with similar speed. The pursuers would have to traverse the length of the hallway before they could mount the second flight in front.

By the time they gained the first floor I had reached the second. Tony might have impeded my flight and compassed my capture then and there, if he had joined in the chase without waiting for reinforcements to come up; but he contented himself with standing before the hall door and shouting.

At the top of my particular flight of stairs I halted and looked down through the opening at the curve of the balustrade. It was important to know if all the party in the cellar was engaged in the pursuit through the house. The passageway below was so dark that it was impossible to see them, but I judged from the sound that the whole coterie had rallied at Tony's call. I sped on my way.

At the front end of the upper hallway

was a window opening on the roof of the veranda. With half the length of the upper hall, and the length of the stairs between me and the enemy, I had plenty of time noiselessly to open the window and step out. I even took the precaution to lower the sash behind me. Then I crept to the edge of the veranda roof and looked over. There was nobody in sight.

Inside the house, on the second floor, I could hear the foremost of the pursuers running about from one room to another. In a moment they would think of the window at the end of the hall.

Swinging my feet over the edge of the roof I rolled over on my face, and with a grip fastened on the eaves, hung at full length. As I was unlimbering myself for the fall, to my dismay somebody came running around one corner of the house; and a voice shouted up at me:

"Come down out of that!"

I did "come down."

The speaker in his eagerness ran so close that he was directly underneath me. Without waiting to reflect on the consequences,

I let go the edge of the roof and dropped. I struck squarely on the shoulders of the man below, and together we went sprawling on the sod.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Tale of Captivity.

The man upon whom I fell was Jesse Brott. This I did not ascertain until some moments later, for we were both rendered for the time being incapable of speech or action.

I struck the mate of the Sebewa squarely on the shoulders, my feet missing his head. Had it not been for this latter circumstance it would without doubt devolve upon me at this juncture to recount the details of a tragedy. As it was, while we were so badly shaken up that we were incapable of movement for a brief interval, neither suffered serious injury.

For a time we lay prone on the turf where we fell. He had gone to earth close to the veranda, but I was pitched clear across the grass plot to the edge of the carriage drive.

Naturally, Jesse received the greater shock, but, as has been two or three times remarked in the course of this history, he was a stout fellow. He regained his feet almost as soon as I did.

My faculties were muddled, and my shoulder, where it had ploughed the soft turf, felt as though the proverbial brick house had fallen upon it. Still, I did not forget that my purpose was to get away. The minute I gained an upright posture I started to run.

I had not taken ten steps when I heard the mate coming after me. I darted across the driveway and headed for the shadow of the trees in front of the house. Before I could gain this shelter he was nearly up with me. It looked as though my fate was settled; for in a tussle I would be no match for the muscular son of Harvey Brott. But I was not yet ready to give up.

I allowed Jesse to approach. Then I had recourse to a trick which was a memory of the days when a school-boy battle with some formidable bully was a matter of frequent occurrence. I suddenly dropped on all fours, imposing myself as a stumbling block in the

path of my pursuer. Jesse Brott never had seen a school-boy upset a bully or else he had forgotten his experience. He was taken off his guard, and before he could check his headlong course, tripped and went clear over me, turning as neat a somersault as any circus acrobat.

This was Jesse's second and unexpected fall, and I hoped it would put him permanently out of the contest. But it looked as though the raw-boned Canadian was put together with ligaments of steel. Before I could run again I had to scramble to my feet, and again he was as quick as I. Intercepting me in my flight for the grove he caught me around the legs, and for the third time we both went down.

We were now panting like a pair of grampuses. He was content to hold me, and I, for my part, could not put forth another effort.

In the meantime the people inside the house had become aware that something was going on outside. The front hall door was thrown open, and the whole crowd came flocking out, Tony Lupton in the lead.

"Have you got him?" asked my uncle, as he came up and pushed through the circle that formed around the mate and me.

"I've got him; that's all right," replied the mate; and not till then would he let go of my legs and permit me to rise.

"Fetch him into the house," commanded my uncle.

There was no use in offering further resistance. I felt that I had fought a good fight, though I had lost, and I was not as much cast down as might have been expected.

In the doorway as we drew up to the steps appeared Mrs. Brott, with a scared look on her face and a lighted lamp in her hand. Her husband roughly ordered her to get back out of view with the light.

"Take it into the kitchen; we'll talk to him there," said my uncle.

I wondered what he expected to accomplish by talking.

"One of you go down to the schooner and let the captain know what's happened," said Jesse Brott, addressing the two sailors

who had been engaged in carrying boxes into the cellar.

One of the twain promptly sped away in the direction of the river.

"It's lucky I got here just when I did," added the mate. "I was coming up to the house when I heard the row inside. He would have got away if I hadn't buckled into him."

"I'm blessed if I see what we're going to do with him now we've got him," said Tony as the whole party, Mrs. Brott in the lead, marched through the house and into the kitchen. "Guess you'll have to put him down cellar with the—"

There was the sound of a slap, and Tony subsided.

Jesse Brott had kept one hand on my shoulder, and he now led me to a seat in a corner of the room, remote from the door.

"Stay there till you're wanted," was his rough command, supplemented by a push that was anything but gentle.

My blood boiled for a minute, but I succeeded in keeping it from boiling over.

During the march to the kitchen I had

plenty of time to reflect, and an analysis of the situation was far from discouraging, from my point of view. Despite the fact that I was a prisoner, I felt that I was in better case than my captors. The expression on my uncle's face would have apprised me of this fact if I had not known it already.

Silas Lupton looked as though he were at his wit's end, and I did not doubt that he was. The events of the past few days had convinced me that my rascally uncle was not overstocked with serviceable wits. The fact that he was engaged in the undertaking in which I found him, was sufficient proof that he was lacking in sense. The only wonder was that he had Captain Eckert for an accomplice. The skipper had impressed me as being a "sharp" man, which is, I believe, the correct qualitative to apply to a rascal who is shrewd enough to evade arrest for any considerable length of time.

The conspirators in the kitchen gathered in a knot in the doorway and talked in low but agitated tones. Jesse Brott, I gathered, soon convinced Silas Lupton that he would better not attempt to deal with me.

"Just let the captain settle this business," I heard him say.

In a few moments the man who had been sent to summon the skipper was heard approaching the house, and with him came the Sebewa's commander. They entered at the open cellar door and came up the cellar stairs. The group in the doorway made way for the skipper as he approached.

I regarded Captain Eckert with considerable interest. This was the first time I had seen him since the night of the collision on Lake St. Clair. He was still looking wan, and though he must have had surgical attention for his hurts since that time, it was evident that he was not much improved.

"This is what happens because I'm not able to attend to everything myself," were the words he uttered as he came into the room.

He turned a fierce look upon his accomplices before he cast a glance at me.

"I thought you said this fellow had gone on a long cruise up the lakes?" he exclaimed, his eye lighting on Tony Lupton.

"That's what I s'posed he had done," de-

clared Tony, beginning to whine and moving apprehensively over toward the place where his father was standing. "That's what pa told me to tell you, anyway."

"I supposed that was right from what you told me," protested Lupton, *pere.*

The skipper uttered an imprecation of disgust, and turned to me.

What he saw did not appear to contribute to his satisfaction. My face was illumined by a smile that I tried to make bland and cheerful, probably succeeding; for the scowl on his features deepened.

The skipper did not seem to know what to say, and I did not wonder thereat.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Mate as a Jailer.

Captain Eckert looked ugly enough to wreak summary vengeance upon me. When he observed me smiling more broadly than before, he seemed to come to the conclusion that it would be better to temporize.

"I suppose you think you're a mighty smart young man?" he said, with as little show of rancor as he was capable of.

"Not particularly. I wasn't smart enough to get away from your right-hand man, Jesse Brott, you will have noticed."

"What brought you here?" he demanded. "What were you prowling about this house for, like a thief, in the middle of the night?"

"That's good, Captain Eckert! You seem to forget that this house belongs to my father, and is my home. I might ask why have

you invaded these premises, but I won't; for I know why."

At this he turned a look back over his shoulder at my uncle. My uncle only shook his head, and the apprehensive expression on this face deepened.

"How long had you been prowling around here when Tony caught you at it?" asked the skipper, turning again to me.

"Long enough to learn all that I care to know."

"A lot of good your knowledge will do you," he retorted, becoming savage again. "Do you know what I am going to do with you, Master Hugh Rodman?"

"Nothing rash, I hope, Captain Eckert," was my cheerful response.

"I'm going to keep you a prisoner till your big stock of knowledge becomes a drug on the market. I'm going to lock you up till you are either willing to give me your word of honor that you won't prattle, or else keep you locked up till your prattling can't do me any harm."

"I expected that."

"You don't seem to let it bother you any."

"I am prepared to endure any inconvenience that may fall to my lot. That was my determination when I set out to balk you and my worthy uncle in your little game, Captain Eckert."

"I see there's no use in wasting time talking to you."

"Not a bit of it, sir."

The captain went back to the group in the doorway. He addressed some command to the mate, whereupon that functionary left the room and the house. Soon he came back bearing a length of rope he had cut from the clothes-line.

Captain Eckert commanded me to stand up and put my arms behind me. I complied, without any show of braggadocio. The expression on the faces of the skipper and his mate warned me not to carry my self-possession too far.

My hands were bound with a deftness that was eloquent of the captain's skill with the rope yarn. He was not particularly careful to avoid hurting me. Tony Lupton's eyes were upon me, and I knew that an expres-

sion of suffering would delight my cousin, but I disappointed him.

"Take him down to the schooner and shut him into the port stateroom," the skipper commanded, addressing the mate. "The rest of you turn to and finish storing away the stuff in the cellar. Work lively, too, for unless I am as big an idiot as the rest of you there'll be somebody prowling around here looking for traces of this fellow before many hours. You want to get the stuff all stored away and every last sign of our work removed."

The latter part of the speech sounded in my ears as the mate led me down the cellar stairs. I could only hope that interference would come before they succeeded in storing "the stuff" and the schooner got away.

The mate had nothing to say while he led me down to the shore. I stepped aboard one of the small boats and he pulled for the schooner's side. You may be sure that I peered with eager eyes through the darkness for some sign of my friends; but as Perry has told you, they had as yet no thought of my misadventure. I noticed that the sky was

overcast and the rain would probably begin to fall in a very few minutes.

Reaching the schooner, Jesse Brott made the boat's painter fast to the rail amidships and clambered over.

"Stand up so that I can get hold of you," he ordered.

Of course I was incapable of boarding the vessel unassisted, with my hands bound behind me.

I obediently stood up; and reaching down he grasped me under the arms. He lifted me up and set me on the deck beside the rail, as handily as though I had been a child of four years.

"Follow me below," was his next command.

In the cabin burned a dim light. A heavy tarpaulin had been thrown over the skylight, and the curtains were closely drawn over the blinds in the cabin doors. Viewed from without, the schooner showed no lights alow or aloft.

I wondered if the captor would loosen or remove the bonds on my wrists, when he consigned me to my prison in the schooner's

stern. Surely, I thought, he would be humane enough for that. But he was not yet ready to lock me up, and I had to endure the fetters a while longer.

His first care was to take a look into the port stateroom. He brought out several articles of clothing which, as this was his room, probably belonged to him. One of the habiliments was a tarpaulin hat, which, as I had lost my own headgear during the struggle at the house, I asked him to leave in the room for my use. He advanced the opinion that I would have mighty little use for a hat, but complied with my request.

Next he tried the lock on the stateroom door and satisfied himself that it was in good working order. The key was hanging inside the room, and when he finished his trial of the lock he left it on the outside. Despite the satisfactory condition of the lock, he did not seem to feel sure that it would keep me in.

"What are you grinning at?" he demanded, observing me smiling at his indecision.

"You seem to be afraid that I am going to

get away. To be sure, I shall get out of there, if I can."

"That'll be all right; but probably it wouldn't do you much good if you did get out of the stateroom. There'll be somebody on deck to keep an eye to windward. Just as sure as you ever are caught up there you get a start for the hospital. There ain't going to be any more monkey business about this job, if I can help it."

I believed him.

He took the precaution to re-examine my bonds, and then went forward into the galley, where I heard him rummaging around in a locker. In a moment he reappeared with a bit and bit-stock and an iron bolt. With the bit and stock he bored a hole in the casing of the stateroom door, directing the bit at such an angle that when the bolt should be inserted it would prevent the door being opened from within. If I should succeed in forcing or picking the lock, I would still be unable to remove the bolt without cutting a hole in the door.

One of the possessions in my pocket at that minute was a jackknife, but I had no

idea that I would be allowed to carry it into my prison. This supposition did not run amiss, for as soon as he finished boring the hole in the casing and had tried the efficacy of the bolt, Jesse commanded me to stand and be searched. Besides the knife, my other possessions were my watch and pocket-book, together with two or three note-books and some old letters. These latter he did not deprive me of. The mate of the Sebewa might be an evil-doer on a large scale, but probably he was not capable of petty thievery. The knife alone he kept. When he had possessed himself of it he untied my hands and commanded me to enter the stateroom. I did so, and he closed, locked and bolted the door.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Fessenden, Ahoy!"

Locked in the port stateroom of the Sebewa I was in a situation to appreciate the account Denny had given of his visit to the vessel, when he declared it was so dark below the schooner's deck that he could "taste" the gloom.

The stateroom door closed hermetically, not a glimmer of light reaching me from the cabin. The only medium of ventilation was a single round window, or port, in the stern, not much bigger than a dinner-plate and provided with a thick glass in an iron rim.

My first act, when the footsteps of the mate were lost to hearing forward, was to kneel on the berth opposite the door and open this window. The atmosphere in the narrow, stuffy room was suffocating, but the open port afforded some relief.

A glance had assured me that the port offered no hope of escape. Of course, if it had offered such a hope my captors would not have left it unlocked. The view through the aperture was of the darkly rolling river and the sky overcast with clouds. The moon had set, and in a few moments after my incarceration it began to rain dismally.

For what seemed a very long time I sat on the edge of the berth and listened to the sound of the wind and the rain. The falling drops struck loudly on the deck over my head, that portion of the stateroom in which the berth was placed being back from the trunk-cabin, and my head coming within an inch of the deck planks. It was after what seemed to be an hour, but which could hardly have been more than a quarter of that time, that I heard a boat approach from the direction of the shore. Then came the sound of feet treading the deck forward. In another moment the *cheep-cheep* of tackle blocks, as the boat was hoisted at the davits, mingled with the clanking of the capstan pawls as the anchor was hove short.

Little things assume significance to a per-

son in my position. My ruling hope at the moment was that something would happen to prevent the sailing of the schooner; and it was interference from the direction of the river that I looked for. The reader will not be wholly mystified, perhaps, when I add that I expected to hear at any moment a loud hail, to be followed by the boarding of the schooner and my own consequent release. The sound of the capstan pawls apprised me that this hope was vain. If there had been any fear in the minds of the Sebewa's crew that interference was at all probable at that moment, Captain Eckert would not have allowed his men to turn the capstan without setting back the pawls so as to obviate the clinking sound as they traveled over the ratchet.

By this time the anchor was tripped, Captain Eckert had come aft and was at his position at the wheel. His words were plainly audible to me, as he issued orders for making sail. The headsails were first set, and the schooner's prow fell off from the wind. I had a momentary view of the shore, barely discernible even at that short distance

through the darkness and the rain.

Heading diagonally away from the land the skipper set his foresail and mainsail and shook out his topsails. The vessel's course was finally laid down stream and nearly parallel with the right bank.

Not long after this a commotion occurred on the decks overhead that for the moment thrilled me with hope.

I heard some one come running aft; and then the mate's voice, with a tremor of fear in it, announced that there were steamer's lights in view just over the port bow.

"I believe it's the Fessenden," he added. "I can make out her build. She's squatty amidships and sharp forward, just like the cutter."

"You've got good eyesight," the voice of the skipper responded derisively. "The cutter is up at Port Huron. I saw an item in the marine column of one of the papers while I was up in the city yesterday."

"Then the paper was wrong. I know the Fessenden well enough to tell her on a darker night than this."

"Take the wheel;" commanded his supe-

rior. "I can't see anything past the mainsail. I'll just take a look for myself."

I heard him step to the lee rail, and probably he bent down so that he could see under the boom. By this time, apparently, the steamer was very near; for when the captain spoke it was in a low tone—so low that I could only just distinguish what he said, though he was directly over me.

"I guess you're right, Brott!" were his words; and I could detect apprehension in their softly modulated utterance. "What do you suppose the old catamaran is poking around this part of the river for?"

"I'm afraid she's looking for us," answered the man at the wheel.

"I don't believe it. I don't believe we're suspected."

"Where is she now?"

"Square abeam and holding to her course up-stream. If they're looking for us they haven't seen us yet. Lucky we didn't show any lights when we got under way."

That I might the more plainly hear this dialogue I had again kneeled on the berth and put my head close to the port. As the

last utterance of the skipper reached my ears I thrust my head through the opening and shouted as loudly as I could bawl:

"Fessenden, ahoy!"

"Moses and Aaron!" ejacuated the skipper.

Before I could open my mouth to repeat the hail the mate had turned from the wheel. He reached down over the rail, at the imminent peril of falling overboard, and dealt me a cuff that made my ears ring.

"Pull in that head, or I'll knock it off," was his savage command.

Half stunned, I obeyed. Denny in my case would have affirmed that his head felt as though he had stopped the flight of a cannon ball.

While I rubbed it I listened for some sound which would indicate that my call had been heard and understood. I listened in vain.

The skipper took his place at the rail, and the mate was heard to put the wheel up a spoke or two. The schooner and the cutter by this time had passed on their contrary courses.

"She keeps on her way all right," I heard the wheelsman observe.

"She does—no thanks to that young cub in the stateroom," responded the skipper.

"I've a notion to go down and crack his empty head against the deck."

"It won't do him any good to holler now," said the mate soothingly. "They're out of hail."

This was the only episode that occurred to vary the monotony of the voyage down stream. I made use of the port but once after that. It was too look for the Tycoon when we passed her anchorage, but it was so dark that I could not see her. I might have called out again, but it would have done no good, and might have impelled the skipper to put his threat into execution.

After a long time I heard Captain Eckert come below and enter the starboard stateroom. The bulkhead under the companionway was thin, and soon I was listening to the sounds of his heavy breathing as he slept.

To my surprise I found that I, too, was sleepy. Striking a match I looked at my

watch: half-past two. There was nothing I could do to better my situation that night, and I reasoned that I might as well imitate the captain if I could.

It did not seem as though I would be able to sleep much, but I must have dropped off as soon as I stretched myself in the berth. I had removed my coat and vest and shoes, and I slept as soundly as ever I did in my berth in the Tycoon's cabin or in my bed at home. Only once was my slumber disturbed.

Through the hazy atmosphere of dreamland there was borne to my ears the sound of the chain-cable running through the hawse-hole at the vessel's bow. The noise was accompanied by the creaking of blocks and the rattle of mast-hoops and travelers as the sails were lowered and stored. The schooner meantime swung around to her anchor; but I only turned over and slept sounder than before.

When I awoke the sun was pouring its rays athwart the Sebewa's stern, and one glancing shaft of light penetrated the open port and gilded the bulkhead at the foot of my bed. The twittering of birds in the trees

on shore mingled with the murmur of the river as it flowed swiftly past the schooner's side.

CHAPTER XXV.

Taking on a Cargo.

It was the bright sunlight that had awakened me. My first care after swinging out of the berth in my prison was to note the time. The hour was seven, and a gnawing sensation in the region of the waistband reminded me that it was long after my usual breakfast time.

There were no sounds of activity on board the vessel. Save for the breathing of the two sleepers close at hand all was silence. One of the slumberers was Captain Eckert, whose sonorous respirations sounded through the thin bulkhead between the staterooms. The other was probably the mate. Having been dispossessed of his quarters by a captive he had made up a bed in the cabin. Doubtless the mate and the men were up till after day-

break, and they were likely to sleep for a good while.

Seeing no prospect of breakfast I turned my attention to a study of the schooner's position. Thrusting my head through the port, I discovered that we were anchored close in shore and not far above some town. The shining dome of a school-house, or other public building, was to be seen, and a church steeple reared its lofty length above the intervening treetops. As of course the schooner was pointed up-stream, and as the shore was on the starboard beam, this was Canadian territory. During the night the schooner had edged across the river.

When I thought I had waited a reasonable length of time for my breakfast I pounded lustily on the stateroom door. The rumpus was effectual in arousing both the Sebewa's officers. Responding to their savage demands as to what was meant by the racket, I stated my wants.

"We'll feed you in a few minutes," said the mate; and then I heard them both get up. In a few moments they left the cabin.

Sounds soon arose throughout the vessel.

Not the least interesting detail was the rattling of dishes in the cabin. When, after the lapse of half an hour or so, Captain Eckert and Jesse Brott again came below, the latter unlocked the door of my prison. I felt as though I had been released from a tomb, and availed myself of the opportunity to take several turns across the larger apartment to stretch my legs. I did not approach the companion-stair, for it was certain enough that a movement in that direction would bring down punishment upon me.

We three—the skipper, the mate, and myself—ate our breakfast in company. It was a good breakfast, composed of fried ham and eggs, bread and butter and coffee. Fresh eggs, I will warrant, are not often to be found in the larder of any vessel of the Sebewa's class, anywhere but on the Great Lakes, or some similar body of water. The sailors of the inland seas, I have been told and I believe, fare better than salt water crews. I did not hesitate to eat my full share of the meal set before us. The skipper seemed to regard my performance with knife and fork with a certain measure of

approval. Perhaps he accepted it as evidence that I had become resigned to captivity. If he did so, he was in error.

The meal was eaten in absolute silence. One of the crew attended us, and he passed to and fro between the table and the galley like a dumb servitor of an oriental potentate. When the skipper and his right-hand man left the table they went at once on deck. Attempting to engage the waiter in conversation I met with a rebuff. He refused to show that he even heard me speak, and hope of diversion in that direction had to be given up.

Bound to test the length of my tether, I started to mount the companionway. The skipper was seated on a camp-stool near the wheel, smoking.

"Get back out of that!" was his rough command the instant my head appeared on a level with the deck.

In the mate's stateroom I had seen a shelf at one of the bulkheads with several books and papers. I looked over the supply, finding a volume which, while of a trashy char-

acter, served to help while away the hours of that tedious day.

The only break in the monotony of events were the meals, and they were not markedly convivial; for, as at the first, everybody refused to talk to me. Night came; I had read the borrowed book through, and felt as though I had been mured in the schooner's cabin for a fortnight. With the fall of night there came new developments.

The first episode on the program was a visit from my kind friend, the mate. He invited me to return to the port stateroom. I did so; and as before he locked and bolted the door behind me. A little later, hearing suggestive noises forward, I was prompted to take up the old position on the berth with my head through the port.

The night was clear and the moon poured its light down over the tree-tops, bathing the schooner in its gleams. As I looked forth, two boats moved shoreward from the schooner's side. Then came a repetition in reverse of the scene witnessed when the Sebewa lay at anchor off the Tycoon's wharf at home.

A wagon laden with the same square boxes before seen came driving down to the water's edge, and its load was transferred to the boats. When the first wagon load had been ferried to the vessel, the boats returned to meet another team which appeared as soon as the first drove away. Two more boat loads were brought off and stored in the forward hold. Then the boats were hoisted at the davits and the schooner was gotten under way. The whole labor of receiving this second cargo occupied about three hours.

Once under way the Sebewa was headed diagonally across the river again. We were homeward bound!

As it turned out, we were not to reach our destination that night, though such seemed to have been the calculation on the part of my captors. The wind was light at starting, and it soon died down to a zephyr. A dialogue between the captain and mate, which as before came to my ears through the open port, informed me of the condition of affairs on deck.

"We can't make it before daylight," the mate observed.

"Of course we can't," responded the captain crossly. "A mule driver on a canal would know we can't make way when the wind falls dead."

"I suppose, then, we'll have to lay by somewhere till to-morrow night," continued the other, seemingly not abashed.

"You don't think we're going to creep up there in daylight, do you? Of course we'll have to lay by. It's the question where, that's bothering me. I don't know but it might be better to keep moving. It may look funny to see a vessel of this size anchored in the river all day, nowhere near port."

"Not if the wind dies down entirely. In that case we'll have company, most like; there'll be other up-bound craft that'll have to lay by, too."

"I'm not hankering for company," growled the skipper; and the statement sounded reasonable.

For some time after this the conversation lapsed. The schooner pursued her way, and every moment she rose farther toward a level keel, a fact which indicated that the

wind continued to fall. It was coming so lightly that I could barely feel it through the port.

"What do you suppose has become of the cutter?" were the next words of the mate; and they at once fixed my attention.

"I don't know what has become of her. How should I? I don't know that I care, either. I don't believe they've had any tip about me. The stuff up there in the cellar will be safe enough for a month yet, and Lupton can get it into the city, a little at a time, without exciting suspicion. Captain Rodman, the father of the boy below, is in Europe, or on his way there, by this time, and we've got the boy himself, where he won't be likely to squeal."

"He'll hear what you're saying."

"I don't care if he does hear. What he hears won't do him a lot of good."

Again there was silence for an interval. Then the mate was off on a new tack.

"Speaking of Lupton," said he, "I don't think that fellow is as sharp as he ought to be for this business."

"He's a dough-head!" was the response,

delivered with a heartiness that bespoke a matured opinion. "If I had known what a numbskull he is I wouldn't have gone into the business with him at all."

"He may have bungled the business, worse than he did by allowing us to land the stuff at the house before the boy got away on his cruise," suggested the mate significantly.

"How's that?" demanded the captain, his tone indicating alarm.

"He told us that the coast would be clear, as far as the boy's father was concerned. Maybe he was off his reckoning there, too."

"I don't think so. When the boy's father left us it was to take a train for New York and a boat for Havre, France. If he is anywhere in this neck of the woods why hasn't he shown up?"

Jesse Brott could not answer this question, and neither could I; but if I had been given to betting I would have been willing to wager a tidy sum that I could have come nearer a correct guess than either of the men on deck.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Girl With a Bicycle.

Notwithstanding the failing wind the schooner held to her course throughout the greater part of the night.

Sometime in the small hours of the morning I was awakened from a light slumber by the familiar rattling of the chain cable and the creaking of blocks as anchor and canvas were lowered. With the thought that we must have covered about half of the return course I resigned myself to sleep again.

The day dawned brightly and clearly and with a gentle breeze from the southwest. The Sebewa, like a nocturnal bird of prey, took wing only during the hours of darkness, and I knew that the anchor would not again be weighed till night-fall. As on the day before, I had recourse to the proscribed view through the port to ascertain our position.

We were now anchored in a bend of the river, close to the American shore. A good view of the land was to be had, and I regarded the prospect with interest, for it was a familiar one.

Along the low-lying shore line a few rods back from the water's edge, ran a wagon road, plainly visible through the intervening forest growth. Any one riding there could plainly see the river, and any vessels passing or at anchor. Captain Eckert had chosen an exposed anchorage, but doubtless he made a show of necessity. As he could not entirely conceal his craft he sought by boldness to avert suspicion.

But just now, though this was a much traveled thoroughfare, no vehicle nor pedestrian was in sight. After all, I reflected, I was not looking for help in that direction and could hardly expect it to come that way. I settled back in my berth and tried to go to sleep again. Silence reigned on board the schooner. As the crew had not turned in till probably after daylight it was likely that none of them would awaken before noon.

While I lay thus, vainly striving to find

oblivion and freedom from the thoughts that vexed me, I heard the faint rumble of a wagon as it wheeled along the roadway. We were so near, and the quietude was so complete, that I almost fancied I could hear the driver clucking to his horses. The sight of a stranger, however distant the view, would be grateful in my captivity, and again I kneeled on the berth and looked through the port.

A two-horse covered vehicle was passing, and the canvas top on the heavy farm wagon was sufficient to proclaim the driver a truck farmer. He was headed for the city. I watched this outfit nearly out of sight and was about to draw dack, when I caught a glimpse of a bicycle as it met and darted behind the team, coming in my direction. I could not be certain, but I believed the rider was a girl or a woman. Here was somebody of rather more interest than a truck farmer for a weary captive to gaze at. The wheel came into plainer view in a moment. I was measurably gratified to learn that my first supposition, that the rider was a girl, was not amiss.

The bicycle came slowly trundling along, and the fair unknown appeared to be now as deliberate, as she had a moment before seemed to be in haste. There could be no doubt that she had noticed the vessel lying at anchor and that she was regarding it with interest. Of course I drew in my head long enough to thrust an arm through the port and wave a salute with my handkerchief. When I looked again, to my surprise the wheelwoman had dismounted and was ranging her machine against a tree by the wayside.

Apparently the fair unknown meant to tarry a while and pay me a call, though circumstances would necessitate that it be a long-range visit. I was appropriately gratified by her condescension. But now, as she came picking her way through the sparse woods toward the water's edge, it struck me that her appearance was not unfamiliar. Before she came close enough for me to distinguish her features I made out her costume—a blue skirt and a waist of white with blue trimmings. When she reached the river's edge a little ways below the schooner

and again turned to look in my direction I recognized her. She was Thyra Benson.

She was on the point of calling out to me. I shook my head to enjoin silence. The motion was understood, and it was plain that she was at a loss to know what to do. In this respect she was not a whit worse off than myself. Though so near, she was yet seemingly too far to render it possible for us to communicate. However, she proved more ready in expedients than I.

I saw her raise both hands above her head, and with her fingers she fashioned letters of the alphabet in the double-hand code of the dumb. These were the words she signalled:

"What can I do?"

With my hands before the port I returned answer in similar fashion:

"I am afraid nothing, now."

To this she made response: "I will get a boat."

My rejoinder was not of a nature to encourage her: "I am locked in."

To my surprise she signaled back: "I will release you."

I would have interposed as emphatic an

objection as I possibly could have framed by the use of sign language, but she did not wait for me to have my say.

She hurried back through the trees, and with a parting flourish of her handkerchief mounted and sped down the road. She seemed to know just what she purposed to accomplish, but I was filled with doubt.

She was gone an hour. Then I saw her approaching in a skiff.

Thyra was an expert oarswoman and owned a skiff of her own. After she came into view around the bend in the shore she was not more than ten minutes in reaching the schooner's anchorage. She approached boldly, but with care not to make any unnecessary noise with the oars. Ranging the skiff under the stern of the schooner she fastened a hold on the rail. I was able to reach through the port and give her disengaged hand a hearty clasp.

"I have been looking for you since yesterday morning," she said in a low voice.

I expressed my surprise.

"When Perry came home and told us about this vessel, and about your going up to

your old home, and that you had disappeared," she explained, "I guessed that you were on board this boat. I have been riding up and down the river road the most of my leisure time since, expecting to see something of you."

I wondered how she expected to accomplish anything now that she had found me, though of course I did not say so. I inquired for my two friends and the yacht, and was told that the Tycoon was moored at the shipyard and that Perry and Denny were on board of her.

"Where did you borrow that boat?" was my next question.

"Of a farmer a little ways down the river —a friend of father's. I intend to ferry you ashore and take you back home with me, Hugh."

"If I could have escaped from the stateroom I would have gotten ashore long ago, Thyra."

"How are you fastened in?"

"The door is locked, and there is a bolt to hold it also. I would have tried to cut my way through, but the captain is asleep in the

stateroom next to me and the mate is asleep in the cabin."

"If it were not for the door being locked I might come on board and remove the bolt so that you could get out."

"The key is in the lock; but do not think of such a thing as coming on board. I have told you that the mate is in the cabin."

"I am not afraid of the mate, or the captain, either," she said with a smile. "They are both asleep, you say; and there is only one man on deck, the deck-watch, isn't that what he would be called? But he is also asleep, up in the bows with his head resting on a coil of rope. I am not afraid of him either."

"Thyra, I do not want you to undertake it," I protested earnestly; and I thought of what Perry and her father would say.

But Miss Thyra was mainly accustomed to having her own way. She seemed to have derived the idea that I must be released at any risk. Notwithstanding my protest she began to move the skiff forward, propelling it by aid of her grasp on the rail.

Her obvious purpose was to board the

schooner at the port main-channel. I did not dare to call out to her to come back, and I could only hold my breath in suspense.

Five minutes' silence ensued, and then I heard her footsteps on the cabin stairs.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Brief But Decisive Battle.

There was no indication of hesitancy in the approach of Thyra, but I thought of possible consequences should the captain or mate awaken while she was in the cabin, and my heart stood still.

I heard her reach the foot of the stairs. Then came the sound of the key softly turned in the lock of my prison door. The next instant the bolt was withdrawn and the door was softly opened. Up to this moment I had not ventured to move for fear of awakening the sleepers, but now I stepped quickly across the threshold.

Thyra stood with her finger on her lips and pointed to the cabin table. On the table lay the mate. He had made up a bed there of sail-cloth and clothing, and he seemed to be sleeping as soundly as though he were in

possession of the berth in the port stateroom.

I motioned for Thyra to precede me up the companion-stair. She complied, and I closed and locked the stateroom door, taking the precaution to replace the bolt. There was no telling that he might not rouse up and cast a precautionary glance in that direction, and this might happen before we could get safely away from the vessel.

To move cautiously was essential, and I was as deliberate as the occasion required. The purpose was to give my fair liberator plenty of time to regain the skiff, so that her escape might be assured in any event. As I started to mount the stairs in my turn I heard her going over the side at the port main-channel.

As luck would have it, Thyra's nerve, which had stood a strain of which I would not have believed it capable, weakened somewhat at this juncture, or perhaps she thought our escape was assured. Instead of descending softly into the boat, as she had left it, she leaped down from the height of the channel. The sound, soft as it was, as she

struck upon the flat bottom of the craft resounded through the silent vessel. Someone was heard to move on the forward deck—the deck-watch—and Thyra sounded a cry of alarm:

"Hurry, Hugh; hurry!"

With two bounds I reached the level of the deck. I was just in time to meet the watch, who came running along the port gangway. Before I could round the end of the trunk-cabin he was between me and the boat.

With the rapidity of a glance I took in the situation. Thyra was safely in the skiff, and had cast off the painter, with which she had taken a turn around the back-stay to hold the boat in position when she came below. She was now holding the craft up to the side by clinging to the rail; and when she saw me pause as if to give battle to the deck-watch she began to work her way hand over hand toward the schooner's stern, propelling the boat.

Since the deck-watch was between me and the boat I had perforce to pause. He was a stout fellow, with a distinctly Hibernian

cast of countenance, and I had heard him addressed as Conroy. He looked as though he was full of fight. He evidently was, by this time, entirely alive to what was going on. He uttered a shout and continued to dash toward me.

When I came bounding to the deck I had glanced at the wheel. On the deck I saw a long wooden belaying-pin. Lazy steersmen sometimes use these implements to belay the wheel when the wind is fresh and steady. By thrusting it between the spokes they can relieve momentarily the strain on their arms. As I fell back before Conroy's impetuous advance I picked up the belaying-pin.

My next maneuver, when I began to rise to an upright posture, was to dodge the enemy. Deck room between the trunk-cabin and the rail was limited, but there was enough of it to permit the bellicose watchman to overshoot his mark and go past me. As he turned to face me again I caught him squarely across the forehead with the heavy stick. There was no chance at such a moment to measure the force of a blow. Under

the impulse of my assault the sailor went down like a stricken bullock. He fell across the head of the companion-stair with his neck doubled up against the trunk-cabin. The awful thought that I had killed him rooted me to the deck. A movement at the foot of the stairs stirred me to action again.

The watchman's shout and the sound of his falling body had awakened the men in the cabin. The mate was heard to spring off the table and the captain to fling open the door of his stateroom.

Without waiting for them to appear I scrambled over the rail and joined Thyra in the boat. She shoved off, and I picked up the oars. As I buried the blades of the oars and she headed the craft for the nearest point on shore the mate, followed by the captain, appeared at the head of the cabin stair. They had to lift the inert form of the deck-watch out of the way before they could step out on deck.

The Sebewa's crew now came scrambling up through the hatch forward, and in response to a loud command from the skipper

ran toward the boat hanging at the davits, in the waist on the port side of the vessel.

By this time the skiff was half-way to the shore, and I regarded our escape as assured. For the first time I looked into the face of my companion. She was very pale, and I feared that she was going to collapse.

"We are safe, now," I hastened to assure her. "They are lowering a boat, but by the time it clears the side we will be on shore."

"Hugh, you struck that man a terrible blow. Do you suppose you killed him?"

"Hardly! He has risen to his feet and is going forward to take his place in the boat. He is rubbing his head with the back of his wrist. I'd be willing to bet there'll be a lump there in a few minutes as big as his fist."

As these words were spoken the bottom of the skiff grounded, and I stepped ashore.

"We must leave the boat, Hugh," said my companion, as I assisted her to land; and she cast a glance over her shoulder at the schooner.

I agreed with her. The schooner's men by this time had gotten their boat into the water. It looked as though they were bent on

continuing the pursuit on land. We did not pause to observe their approach, but made our way up the bank. On the way I told her what to do.

"Return to the farm-house and get your wheel. I will take the other direction—towards the city. They will not pursue you, for it is me, and me alone, they want. They will not catch me, for I shall have a good start."

At the margin of the woods, accordingly, we separated. The boat with the Sebewa's men had not yet reached the shore.

"Don't be alarmed, and don't even hurry," I implored of her as she set out. "I shall engage their full attention."

The action of Captain Eckert, who was steering the boat, must have reassured her more than my words; for the skipper, observing me to strike off to the right, promptly headed his boat up stream a little, so as to make a landing as nearly as possible in the line of pursuit. No attention was bestowed on my late companion, but the skipper's gaze was fixed on me.

"If you catch me, Captain Eckert, you

will show yourself a better runner than I think you are capable of proving," was my thought; and I laid my course across the road and into the woods on the landward side.

As I made good my escape it will not be necessary to give a detailed account of the chase. Suffice it to say that the schooner's men followed me quite to the city limits, but at no time did they draw close enough to cause apprehension.

It was long after noon when I entered the city, and I was pretty well fagged. Nobody knew better than I, however, that the affairs of the evil-doers were rapidly approaching the climax, and that there was no time to be lost. My plan of action was carefully mapped out, and I hastened to put it into execution. I headed straight for the ship-yard and the sloop.

On board the Tycoon I found Denny Cleary. Perry had just gone home. Denny was overjoyed to see me. He wanted to hear my story at once.

"In a little while," I promised him.

I asked him to go up to the Benson's and

summon our friend. While he was gone I cooked and ate the first food I had tasted that day. It put new life into me, and I felt that I was ready for the closing scenes in the series of unusual events that had thrust themselves into my ordinarily quiet life.

Perry brought with him from the house a grateful bit of news. Thyra had just returned, having been driven to the city limits by the farmer's wife, whence she had wheeled the rest of the way home.

"What now?" asked Denny, as I gave the command to make all sail on the sloop.

"A hunt for the revenue cutter Fessenden, and failing in that search, a consultation with the collector of the port."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Beginning of the End.

The statement that our first step would be to find the revenue cutter, or, failing in that, to see the collector of the port, to Denny's mind called for an explanation. To give it was to detail all that had occurred since I parted company with my friends at the time of leaving them in charge of the sloop. This recital was given. Perry seemed prepared for my disclosures, and while he listened he gave his best attention to the river; for while I talked we did not lose sight of the immediate purpose in view.

When I reached that point in my narrative where the sailor from the Sebewa dropped the packing-case on the cellar floor and I heard the sound of breaking glass, Denny jumped to his feet.

"Bottles!" he exclaimed.

"Undoubtedly."

"Whisky bottles," he added.

"Right again," I agreed, joining Perry in a laugh.

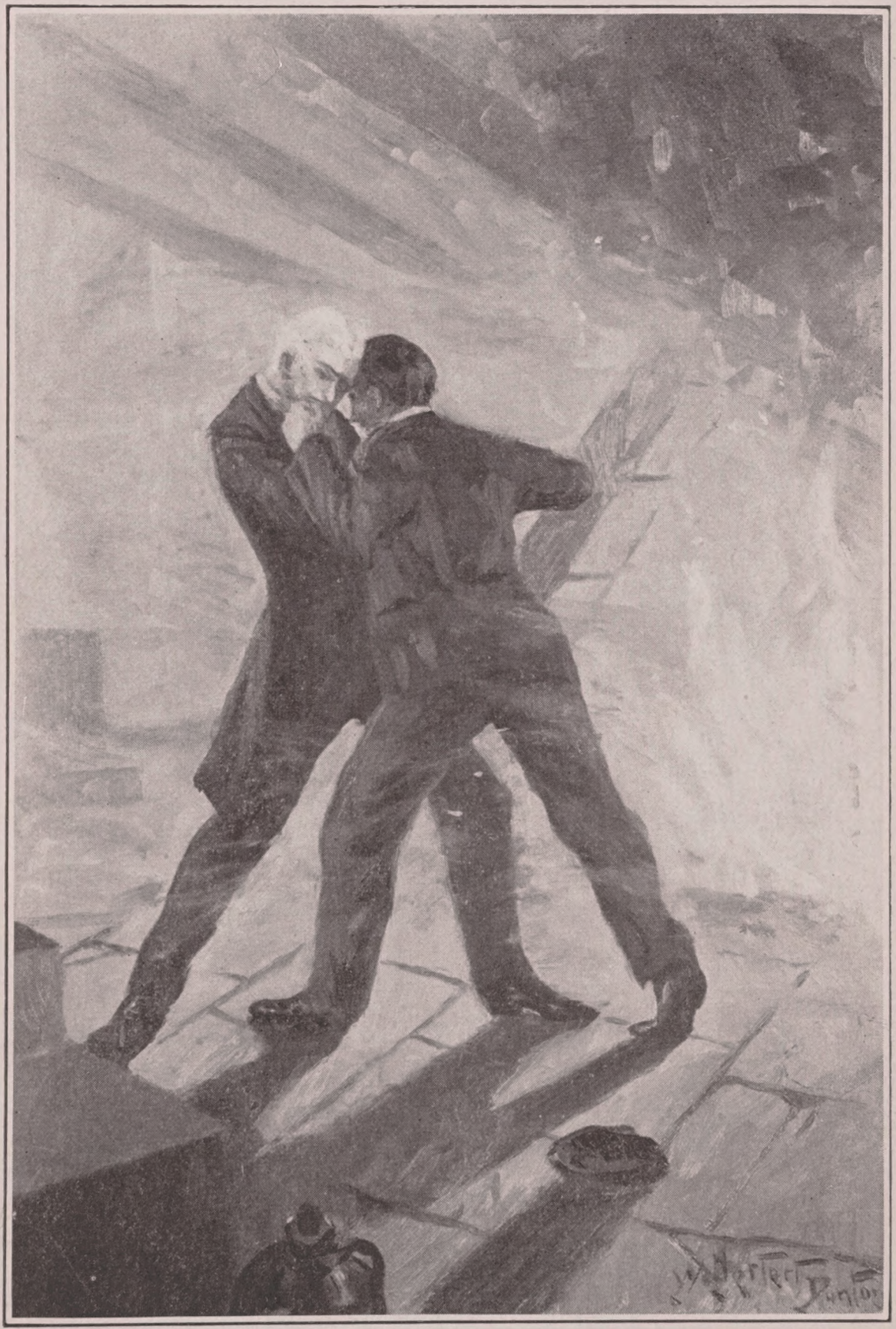
"I see the hole in the ladder," declared Denny. "The Sebewa's people and your uncle are smugglers—whisky smugglers."

"It seems to me, Denny," said Perry at this point, "that a fellow who has lived on the Detroit River all his life and read the daily papers for several years ought to have guessed the truth long ago. Of course the Sebewa is a smuggler."

Denny was not at all abashed.

"Go ahead with your yarn, Captain Tiptop," said he, taking his seat again. "I see the finish, though."

The remainder of the story was an account of my capture, incarceration on board the schooner, and escape with the help of Thyra. As may well be credited to me, I did not fail to give my fair rescuer a great deal of credit for the part she had played. No sooner was the recital finished than Denny



AMIDST STIFLING SMOKE AND FUMES OF OIL, WE STRUGGLED.
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was ready with an opinion as to future events.

"When the smugglers let you get away, Captain Tiptop, they spilled the fat into the flames," he declared. "If we can only get the revenue people on their trail before dark, we can capture the schooner before she can get back into Canadian waters."

"I don't see how you can feel so sure of that," interposed Perry, who was never inclined to have a high opinion of Denny's deductions. "There is wind to move the sloop. What's to prevent the schooner from moving, also?"

"They chased Captain Tiptop clear up to the city limits, didn't they?" demanded the crew.

"So it appears."

"Then it'll take them till nearly dark to get back to their boat, won't it?"

"Possibly."

"And after that, with this wind, they won't be able to get out of reach, will they?"

"You are correct, as far as you go, Denny," said I. "The smugglers on the schooner are not the only ones we want to

apprehend, though. I confess that I am more anxious to bring my uncle to book than I am to see Captain Eckert caught."

"They won't know anything about your escape at the house, and they will be expecting the schooner to come up to-night with her second cargo."

Perry sniffed.

"They will, Denny, unless Captain Eckert has been thoughtful and considerate enough to send one of his men to warn them," I interposed.

It may as well be interpolated right here that Captain Eckert did not warn his accomplices. Whether he wilfully kept them in ignorance of their impending capture or whether he forgot all about them, I never learned. The movements of the law-breakers were full of blunders, as the movements of law-breakers are said usually to be, and it is possible that the skipper of the Sebewa blundered here as he had done at several critical points.

All the time we talked we kept the sloop to her course down the river. Perry told of his and Denny's cruise down the stream

while they were in search of the Sebewa; and as at that time they had seen nothing of the Government vessel I concluded that our chances were better in the other direction. The wisdom of this finding became apparent when we drew up to the city.

We sighted the cutter lying at anchor off the foot of Woodward avenue, the principal thoroughfare. At the moment of this discovery certain movements on the vessel's decks apprised us that she was about to get under way.

"They're piping the crew to stations," declared Denny excitedly. "Why don't you signal her, Captain Tiptop?"

He had taken the glass from Perry and was leveling it at the cutter.

"No use to signal," said Perry. "They couldn't see any signal we could make. I hope she is not bound up the river. If she is she will be out of reach in a few moments."

"I think she is coming down to meet us," I said.

The reason for this supposition was the distant view I had caught of two men on the cutter's quarter-deck. One of them was an

officer, for the sheen of gold lace was discernible even at that distance in the rays of the declining sun. The other was not an officer. He was not a member of the cutter's company, for he was dressed in civilian attire. The exclamation that now burst from Denny did not take me by surprise.

"There he is again! Do you see him?" said Denny, without removing the glass from his eyes. "The man with the long-tailed coat, I mean. He's pointing in this direction."

My own observation thus verified, I took action that surprised my crew. Signing to Perry to man the sheets, I brought the Tycoon about and headed down the river again.

"What caper are you cutting now, Captain Tiptop?" demanded Denny excitedly. "Are you going to run away from her?"

"I am going to take up the course she will soon adopt. She will soon overhaul us."

Then I told them that the hour had come for the closing scenes in the story of our adventures with the smugglers, and informed them what part I purposed to play in the denouement, and what was desired of them. They agreed that the action I contemplated

was a necessary one, and made no objections.

Complying with my purpose, the sloop was sailed down stream to a point opposite my father's house. With the glass I searched the shore. There was nobody in sight on the river side of the dwelling.

All this time the cutter was drawing nearer. When my companions landed me at the Tycoon's wharf, she was within hailing distance. As I struck out through the wood path toward the house I heard her speed bell ring, and knew that she would lay to, long enough for Perry and Denny to board her and tell their story.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Eckert Plays His Last Card.

Without waiting to observe the movements of my companions in the sloop's tender, or the actions of the revenue cutter, I hurried toward the house.

By this time the sun was below the horizon, and though it would not be dark for an hour it was dusky among the trees along the path. No sound or sign of activity was manifest at the rear of the dwelling. I reasoned that my uncle and his son, and possibly Harvey Brott and his wife, were together at the front, and their position would leave the way clear for me. Mounting the back steps with cautious tread I entered the kitchen.

The kitchen was bathed in the shadows of the falling night, and was silent and deserted. As I made my way toward the cellar

stairs, voices sounded at the front of the house, and I paused to listen.

"They ought to be here soon after dark; for they must be anchored somewhere, not far down stream."

This speech was voiced by Tony, and to it my uncle made response:

"You had better go down to the wharf in a few minutes and see if they are in sight yet."

The voice of Harvey Brott was next heard, but he always spoke low, and I could not hear what he said. I thought of the cutter, at that moment lying off the wharf, and if I had not realized before that current affairs were verging on the climax I had the fact borne in upon me now.

Without waiting any longer to listen to the talk of the conspirators in the library, I made my way down the cellar stairs.

A place of concealment in the cellar was what I sought, and I was not long in finding one. The boxes which had composed the Sebewa's cargo, half-filled the space below stairs, and they had not been piled with any great regard for order. In a nook next

the exterior wall, concealed from the view of any one descending the stairs, I found as good a hiding-place as I could have desired. Besides, it was dark in the cellar, even in the day time, for the narrow windows up under the ceiling admitted little light.

In the nook in the pile of boxes, accordingly, I took my stand, and waited. My heart was beating fast, and I felt provoked that I could not better control my feelings.

Perry afterward told me what occurred outside the house. When the cutter came to a stand-still opposite the wharf, he and Denny pulled off and boarded the vessel. As they clambered up the accommodation-ladder a boat put off amidships, and while they were in the cutter's cabin a party of the cutter's men were surrounding the house.

Though Perry and Denny did not know it at the time, the man of the soft felt hat and the long-tailed coat went ashore as a passenger in the boat, and he attended to the placing of the marines about the dwelling in such position that nobody could leave it without being apprehended.

While my two friends had their interview

in the cutter's cabin with the commander of the vessel, the vessel herself was proceeding down the river. Perry was the narrator on this occasion, and he afterwards said that he was surprised, not to say a little disappointed, to find that his story did not create as much of a sensation as he expected it would. The cutter's commander seemed to know all about the affairs of the smugglers, and it was plain that he also knew a great deal about the movements of the Tycoon. It did not take my friends long to discern that the revenue men had laid their plans carefully, and that each succeeding event had been foreseen and provided for, as witness the present movements of their vessel.

The cutter held on her way down the stream, and a sharp look-out was kept ahead. When a subordinate officer entered the cabin with the announcement that the Sebewa had been sighted the commander brought the talk with the Tycoon's crew to an abrupt conclusion. He went on deck, and Perry and Denny went with him.

From the forward deck of the cutter they could see the Sebewa, with all sail set, mak-

ing the most of the light breeze in the effort to get across the river and into Canadian waters. The cutter was at this time making a good showing as to speed, but she at once headed away on a course to intercept the fugitive, and clapped wings to her feet.

Captain Eckert and Jesse Brott were not long in learning that they were certain of being headed off before they could get across the international boundary line, and it was doubtful, too, that the cutter would stop at the line.

The evil-doers took steps to compass their personal safety, without regard for their vessel. They were fated to lose the Sebewa, and no doubt, as Denny expressed it later, Captain Eckert had visions of what the inside of a prison cell looked like, if he had not experienced imprisonment at some time in his career previous to this. The spectators on the decks of the revenue cutter saw the schooner come up into the wind, and a moment later she was discovered to be drifting with the current. Her crew had abandoned her.

Now a long-boat was discovered in the

gloom, pulling away from the farther side of the Sebewa, and headed for the nearest point of land, which was on the Michigan side. So little way had the schooner made from the shore in the light breeze that it looked as though the smugglers would be able to gain the river bank and the woods, before the cutter's men could intercept them.

It became a race between the revenue vessel and the rowboat—between eight oars in the hands of lusty oarsmen with every incentive to strenuous effort, and the paddle-wheels of the steamer. There must have been an exciting time of it for a moment, and while I was having some excitement of my own at the same period, I have always regretted that I was not there to see the fun. It terminated when the cutter dashed in between the row-boat and the land so close to the shore that everybody but the wheelsman momentarily expected her to go aground.

A stern command from the cutter's deck caused the men at the oars to cease rowing. A moment later they were taken on board. Perry and Denny stood at the rail when they

came over, and Captain Eckert turned a look upon them that spoke eloquently of what he would have done had he been in a position to wreak vengeance upon them.

After capturing the schooner's crew, who were found to have all taken to the boat, the cutter picked up the Sebewa, and with the prize in tow, headed back up the river.

CHAPTER XXX.

Frustrated Designs.

While the revenue cutter was engaged in the chase and capture of the Sebewa, events of an interesting nature, as has been intimated, were occurring at the house. Though I was not a participant in all of these, of course it was not long before I was informed about them.

Cooped in my nook in the pile of boxes in the cellar I was shut off from the outer world. I waited for what seemed to me a very long time, but which could not have been more than fifteen minutes, before I heard any sounds on the floor above. Then foot-steps approached the kitchen regions. As it would be a wise measure to ascertain the exact disposition of the enemy, when the foot-steps were heard to pass the head of the cellar stairs I stole forth and cautiously

mounted the flight, till my head was on a level with the ground floor. The party which had deployed from the front of the house was composed of my uncle and his son.

"Go down to the wharf, Tony, and take a look down the river," I heard my uncle say. "It is pretty nearly dark, and the Sebewa ought to be somewhere near by, by this time. The minute you sight the schooner come back here and tell me, and Brott and I'll have the cellar door open to take in the goods."

Tony said something indicating that he understood, and was heard to start down the steps. All at once he halted and cried out:

"Who's that? Hello, there!"

"What is it?" demanded his father, who had turned to re-enter the house, and who now came hurrying back.

"I saw somebody cross the path down there under the trees. It looked like a man with a uniform on."

"Nonsense!" said his father; but he lowered his voice.

"No nonsense about it! I tell you I did," averred the boy stoutly. "I saw a man with

a uniform on, go across the path and behind one of the trees."

"It must be Brott, then, and you were mistaken about the uniform. Nobody but Brott and his wife is about the place, except us."

"That's where you're off: 'twasn't Brott," insisted Tony. "Brott's in the library, where we just left him; and Mrs. Brott is upstairs where he sent her as soon as it began to get dark. I tell you I did see the uniform!"

By this time Tony had also lowered his voice.

"Wait and watch!" his father commanded; and then they both drew back into the passage-way.

For several minutes there was silence. It may be imagined how eagerly I listened. Then finally—

"Have you seen him again?" I heard my uncle ask. "I haven't seen anything that looks like a man."

"Maybe I was mistaken, but I don't believe I was," said Tony doubtfully.

"Of course you were! Now, go ahead, and look for the schooner."

"I don't know whether I want to go out there, or not."

"What are you afraid of?"

"Of the police, to be sure!"

"Nonsense, I tell you! What would the police be around here for?"

"They'd be around here all right enough, if they knew what's going on. And maybe they do."

"How could they know?"

"Maybe Cousin Hugh has got away from Captain Eckert."

"You're talking nonsense, Tony!" repeated Silas Lupton impatiently. "If you won't go down to the wharf I suppose I'll have to go."

"I don't think there's any use of anybody going, but I'll take the chance," and Tony was heard to descend the steps again.

This time he kept on. Every moment I expected to hear a challenge under the trees behind the house. I believed Tony had seen a man in uniform there, if his father did not.

Silas Lupton stood for some time in the door-way looking after his son, and probably he followed Tony with his eyes till the boy

disappeared in the shadow of the grove. Then he started to walk back to the front of the house. He was met half-way by Harvey Brott. The first words spoken by my father's man-servant, though couched in his usual low tone, betrayed excitement; and as I had made bold to advance up the cellar stairs till I stood in the doorway, I plainly heard what he said:

"Mr. Lupton, there's strange doings going on around this house."

"What d'ye mean?" demanded the other; and I could almost fancy I heard his teeth chatter.

"I was just looking through the library window, and I saw a man cross the driveway in front of the house. Then I saw another one walking along in the shadow of the trees on the east side. They both had uniforms on. I believe the house is surrounded by revenue men."

"It can't be—I won't believe it!" My uncle's voice sounded as though he was going to burst into tears. "What's that?"

"That" was a footstep on the veranda before the front hall door.

"The revenue men!" ejaculated Harvey Brott.

My uncle uttered a cry of terror and bounded out on the rear porch.

This movement elicited a challenge from somebody out under the trees.

"Halt, there!"

It was echoed by a cry in the voice of Tony Lupton:

"Run pa! They're here,—and they've got me."

My uncle leaped off the end of the porch,—but a movement on the part of Harvey Brott had driven me into the cellar.

As my uncle made a break for liberty, Brott dodged into the cellar-way; and as I, for my part, retreated toward the pile of boxes, he came tumbling down the stairs. I hid in my old nook and peered forth at him.

This was precisely the movement I was expecting from this particular ally of Captain Eckert. The skipper had not relied on the wit or courage of my uncle to cope with such an emergency as this. Harvey Brott had his instructions to destroy the evidence against the smugglers in case the house was

entered by the authorities, and he was at this moment intent on carrying out his orders.

I had not noticed a pile of old papers and other combustible materials which had been placed under the cellar stairs and saturated with kerosene, but I now discovered it as Brott, with lighted match in hand, advanced in that direction. Realizing what would happen if the match were dropped into that inflammable stuff and the blaze allowed to spread I sprang from my concealment and grappled with him.

Quick as I was, he was too quick for me. I knocked down his hand, but the match fell among the papers and the flames leaped up in our faces. I attempted to drag him back so that I might stamp out the blaze, but he clung to me. For an instant it looked as though the building would be burned, and us with it; for the stairs were on fire!

Amidst stifling smoke and fumes of oil, we struggled. Now in his frenzy he seemed intent on hurling me into the blazing mass. He was an old man and crippled with rheumatism, but the strength and agility he displayed in that supreme moment would

have done credit to an athlete. I shouted for help.

From above there came an answering cry. Down the brilliantly lighted stairs bounded a familiar figure. A grip of steel was fastened on the throat of my adversary and he was torn from my grasp and hurled half-way across the cellar.

"Captain Rodman!" gasped the incendiary.

My father made no response, but picking up a piece of board he raked out the burning paper from under the stairs. I had whipped off my coat and was beating out the fire, where it had caught on the stair-case.

CHAPTER XXXI.

An Explanation.

I have reached the last entry in the Tycoon's log-book, devoted to that period in my career as a yachtsman which had to do with Captain Eckert and my uncle, Silas Lupton. It is a single line. It reads:

"Explanation by my father."

The line suffices to recall all that needs to be told of events subsequent to the arrest of the smugglers.

The man who had bounded down the stairs in response to my call for help was my father, as has been indicated by the cry of Harvey Brott. The reader probably guessed long ago that he was the man with the soft felt hat and the long-tailed coat, which was an attire he had adopted when he set about collecting evidence against his half-brother and Captain Eckert.

Not till the day after the arrest of the law-breakers did my parent give an explanation of his singular conduct in this affair. He went on board the cutter with the prisoners, Silas Lupton, Tony and Harvey Brott, when they were conducted thither by the officer in command of the cutter's party to join the other prisoners in the cutter's cabin. From the cutter the captives were later conducted to the Wayne County jail in Detroit. I may as well tell at this point what was their punishment, where punishment was meted out.

The smugglers did not give the Government the trouble and expense of trying them, but pleaded guilty. The skipper of the Sebewa and Silas Lupton were each sentenced to three years in the penitentiary and to pay a large fine, and the schooner, of which they were joint owners, and her cargo, were confiscated. Jesse Brott and his father, as accomplices, received sentences of one year each, which seemed to me to be small punishment for their offense. Tony Lupton was not included in the indictment against the wrong-doers, nor were the fore-

mast hands of the Sebewa. As I understood it, they were not held responsible for the misdeeds of their superiors, being, by the law which governs the conduct of seamen, compelled to obey orders. Certain accomplices of the smugglers living in the queen's domain were shown up in the confession which Silas Lupton made, and there was talk of their being proceeded against; but if they ever were brought to book I never heard of it.

Mr. Alvord, my father's lawyer, was a visitor at the house the day after the capture of the smugglers. To him and me my father explained how the law-breakers had come into temporary possession of the place.

"I executed a note in favor of a certain business man some time ago," said he, and told who the man was. "The note was secured with a mortgage on this place. It was given in order that I might assist a friend who was in financial trouble. In some manner Silas Lupton heard of it. He had made overtures to me with a view of buying this place, but I did not care to sell. He proceeded to buy up the note I had given, prob-

ably believing that I would be unable to meet it. I am frank to say that I never liked my half-brother, and I did not object to allowing him to harbor a delusion. I had the money at hand with which to pay the note, and have it now.

"When Lupton wrote me that he wanted to take possession of this place before the paper fell due, the proposition struck me as being humorous in the excess of impudence it displayed. I suppose I am not like most people, and I did what few persons would have done—told Lupton he was at liberty to come on and settle himself in my house.

"But I did not give him this permission till after I saw him at Algonac, and it was while I was there that I grew to suspect the truth about my very respectable half-brother and his friend, Captain Eckert. I looked up the record of both for the last few years, and set about trapping them. The commander of the Fessenden is a friend of mine of long standing and he helped me to accomplish my purpose, as you have seen. Hugh and his friends did their share. And now, let's bury the whole matter."

And bury it he did. I never heard him speak of it again.

Naturally, Perry and Denny and I, as well as Thyra, could not be so indifferent. The career and capture of the smugglers was a theme often gone over during subsequent cruises of the Tycoon, and when I visited at the Benson home. One of the Tycoon's subsequent cruises was the interrupted trip to Mackinaw.

Of course I did not wait as long to pay my devoirs to Thyra and thank her for what she had done in my behalf, as my dilatory mention of the fact may lead you to suppose. Thyra and I are the best of friends—you will not expect me to say more, though I could write much on this theme, which is an interesting one to me, though it might not prove so interesting to others.

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